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Adventure

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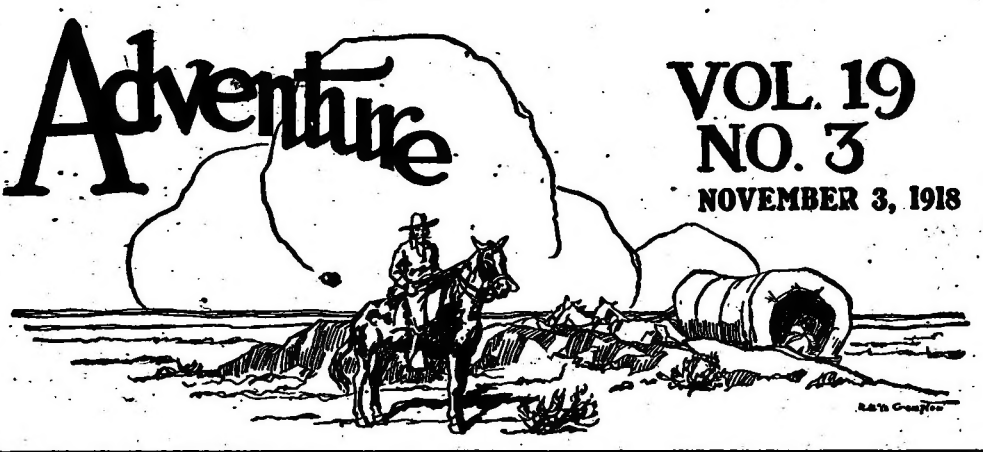

VOL. 19
NO. 3
NOVEMBER 3, 1918

Published Twice a Month by THE RIDGWAY COMPANY

J. H. GANNON, President — C. H. HOLMES, Secretary and Treasurer

Spring and Macdougal Streets - - New York City
6, Henrietta St., Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 1, 1910, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of 1879.

ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN, Editor

Yearly Subscription, $3.00 in advance — Single Copy, Twenty Cents

Foreign postage, $2.00 additional. Canadian postage, 60 cents.

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A Complete Novel

By COURTNEY RYLEY COOPER

A strong story of circus life. Also

THE WATERS UNDER THE EARTH

A Complete Novelette

By S. B. H. HURST

The story of a strange disappearance.

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Mid-November Number

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Adventure

Registered, United States Patent Office.

NOVEMBER 3RD 1918
VOL. 19. NO. 3

021

A COMPLETE NOVEL

by

WILBUR HALE AND CECIL HAIG

UNMINDFUL of the steady, driving rain and callous to the cold wind that beat the sheets of water against them mercilessly, two men dug patiently into the mud and ooze of a grave, their ghoulish work lighted only by the feeble rays of a lantern, around three sides of which one of them had bound his coat. Each shovelful, painfully separated from the sticky mass below their feet, was lifted with an effort, for it was saturated with the torrents that for a week without cessation had fallen on Rio de Janeiro.

The workmen panted with their exertions, but neither hurried nor cursed their task. They labored mechanically, strenuously, but in dogged silence.

Not twenty feet away, crouching against a black marble monument, a third man, breathing lightly for fear of being heard, fixed his eyes on them and their work. He was an American, buttoned into a rain-proof coat that completely covered his neat, tailored clothes, and with a wide-brimmed fedora hat pulled low on his head, protecting him as well as any one out in such a storm could be protected. Nevertheless the cold, the gloom, the damp darkness of the cemetery, and his own nervousness, shook him like an ague, and—soundlessly—he cursed the weather and the slowness of the ghouls.

The cemetery, like most of those villages of the dead in Brazil, was surrounded by a high, thick wall into which, at two or three points, metal gates were let. His back to one of the pillars of the nearest gate there sat, watching the watcher and the watched, a fourth man, neither dogged nor nervous, but frankly angry. He was a Brazilian, short, powerful and with a cruel, wicked face, and under the semi-military greatcoat he wore, his broad hand closed on the cold butt of a heavy revolver.

Apparently he was only casually interested in the grave-robbers—for he had followed them to the place at no great distance and had made no special efforts to conceal his movements from them, though probably they did not know he was there—nor care. But after his arrival and while he was still standing in the lee of the gate-pillar grumbling to himself at the wretchedness of the weather, his alert, cat-eyes had caught the movement of the third man..

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The lantern carried by the pair of workmen, faltering as were its rays, had lighted enough of the cemetery so that the Brazilian at the gate had seen the movement of a figure from a shrub beside the cemetery road to the shadow of the tall, black monument. It had been then that he had clambered to his place of observation on the wall, and from that moment, save for growling imprecations on his duty and the wind and rain, he had not moved his gaze from that shadow beyond the lantern.

In such a storm, on such a night, in such a place it would have seemed that the presence of four men would have been extraordinary enough—yet there was something still more extraordinary, for a fifth man was there, unknown to any of the others—unsuspected by them. This watcher had an immense advantage over the rest, if advantage were of merit in such circumstances, for he had seen all of them come and take their places.

He was a tall, lithe, well-made young man, without an overcoat, but with a cowboy's rubber poncho over his shoulders and above that a wide sombrero—the two of them shedding the rain from his head and the upper part of his body, and his boots protecting his feet and calves. He, like the Brazilian, had trained his eyes to the darkness so that he could see something, even in the gloom and black of the rain. Also he knew the plainsman's trick of stooping low enough to silhouette objects before him against whatever light the sky held—and as the business and theater district of Rio was beyond the cemetery he had been able to see a good deal.

He was patient, like the grave-violators, keenly concerned, like the man by the monument; and, like the Brazilian on the wall, he had a revolver ready to his hand. But he did not clutch it, nor did he curse the weather, nor did he conceive any dislike for the others in this little play. He merely smiled—and waited.

Drawlingly, as was his habit, he muttered to himself:

"This job, now, is my idea of a proper mix-up. Soft hat watches the roughnecks, derby watches soft hat, and I watch 'em all—and everybody takes it easy and slow and quiet, and there isn't anybody pushed off the gang-plank in a wild rush and hurry! Cut to pattern, Billy June—cut to order, and made to measure, like a woman's skirt! Oh, you've hit something, have you, you earth-worms?"

Apparently they had—the men in the grave, for their tools scraped on rough boards and one threw his shovel to the side of the grave and stooped. Billy June shifted his position so that the lantern rays fell directly on the grave for him, and held his poncho a little farther from him. After a few moments of clawing and straining the ghouls took ropes and passed them under the coffin. Then they scrambled out—the grave was only three or four feet deep, as is the way with the graves of the pauper dead—and began tugging.

Presently, with a sucking sound, the crude box was torn loose from its place, unceremoniously yanked upward and carelessly dumped to one side. Picking up their shovels and placing them on the box the workmen then raised it and were about to march off when they were stopped, abruptly, by the sudden appearance of the man who had been hiding near the monument. Billy June, taking a few steps forward, cautiously, and careful to keep the deep shadow of trees or the wall behind him, turned his head and strained his ears to hear what would next occur.

The American spoke hurriedly, in very broken Portuguese.

"A moment, workmen," he said. "Do not be alarmed or angry—I mean no harm. I only ask a favor—for which I would pay well."

He said *bastantamente*, which means, "extravagantly" or "more than it is worth."

The two grave-robbers stared a moment, then put down their burden. One of them went back to the grave, hastily, caught up the lantern, and threw its light on the unexpected newcomer.

"Are you a *medico?*" he asked, in a low, harsh voice.

"No, I am not a surgeon. I do not want the body. I only ask you to help me search it."

The Brazilians laughed.

"It was robbed before it was brought here," the man with the lantern said. "If there had been money the dead one would not have been buried in this field."

"It was robbed?" the American jerked. "What do you mean?"

The Brazilian shrugged.

"Some one sees that no valuables are buried on the poor."

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The American was disturbed, very apparently. He hesitated, pushing his hat back a little, and passing a hand hastily over his wet face. Then he spoke again.

"The thing for which I seek was not valuable to any one but me," he declared. "If you will help me search I will give you two *contos*. No one will know. All I ask is that you make the search."

"Do we get the money if your search fails?" the second Brazilian asked, sourly.

"In any event—yes."

"Well," the man said, reluctantly. "But we must make haste."

"Can you open the coffin?"

"Certainly. That is *muy facile!*"

"Good. Be quick."

A shovel forced under the edge of the lid loosened the boards and almost at once the coffin was uncovered. The sight within staggered the stranger for a moment, then with a strong effort of will he knelt with the other two.

"What I seek," he said, "is merely a paper. It may be in one of the pockets of the coat, or it may be in some secret place. Look carefully."

They held the lantern up and conducted their horrible investigation. Billy June crouched to the ground and got the top of the cemetery wall between him and the dull glare of light rising from the city beyond. He saw the man stationed there rise cautiously, feel his way to the edge of the wall, and slowly disappear. Quite certainly he was coming up to watch from a better vantage point. June smiled again, that slow, enigmatic smile of his, and sat on his heels, cowboy fashion, waiting patiently again for the next move.

It came rather abruptly.

The stranger at the coffin rose, in a moment, with an exclamation of satisfaction, hastily pulled out a purse, dropped several bank-notes to the ground beside the two ghouls, and thanked them, with a triumphant note in his voice.

"Both you men and myself will forget that we have met here?" he asked, suggestively.

The Brazilians shrugged.

"We have no memories," one said.

"That is excellent." The stranger paused a moment. "Will you tell me, now, why you took up this body at night? I have been watching for several days, but I did not expect the work to be done in the dark. It was only by chance that I saw you coming here tonight."

"The body was in a rented grave. The rent for another quarter has not been paid. It is the custom——"

"Oh, I know the custom. But why at night?"

The Brazilians looked from one to another.

"We do not know, senhor. It was the order."

Billy June, watching and listening with the closest attention, saw the fourth man before the other two did. It was the Brazilian from the wall. He spoke from the shadows behind the group.

"It was the order," he repeated, with a grating laugh. "I will tell the *estrangheiro* what he desires to know."

AT THE first word the two workmen, dropping their tools with harsh grunts, started up, and as the fourth man stepped within the circle of light from the smoking lantern, they uttered oaths and, without a moment's hesitation, fled in opposite directions at the top of their speed. The Brazilian seemed scarcely to notice them, or to heed their departure. He stepped forward to confront the American.

The latter leaped aside, clumsily, and with a swift kick overturned the lantern. June, crouching on the ground fifty feet away, could see the two vague splotches move violently, come into collision, rebound and separate. A heavy revolver flashed and barked and the Brazilian cursed.

"Stand!" he shouted. "I am of the police! You must make explanation——"

The next instant the man who fled came plunging out of the rain and the darkness directly into June's arms. Billy rose up as though from the earth, threw the fugitive with a quick twist, and put a hand to the man's throat.

"Lie still, neighbor," he whispered, in the other's ear. "You'll be shot if you don't."

"What the ——"

June stifled the involuntary exclamation with his fingers and with his knee pinned the prostrate man's right arm to the ground. The next instant gave him time to tear open the man's clenched hand, take from it what was hidden there—the packet stolen from the clothes of the dead—and spring up

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and aside in the darkness. His victim swore loudly, frenziedly—and a second revolver shot crashed out.

Billy June, a few feet away behind a tree, heard the American's voice break and cease, heard him scramble desperately to his feet, heard him dash blindly off, his feet tripped and clogged by the heavy mud. The Brazilian behind them cried out another warning, plunged forward and past June's hiding-place, cursing the darkness and breathing hard, and disappeared, running heavily.

The storm swallowed up all sight and sound of them. June did not wait more than a few seconds. Then he went boldly forward to the coffin, finding his way with little difficulty because of his previous care in noting how the land lay. When his boot struck the box he took from his pocket a tiny electric flash-lamp, scarcely larger than a pencil.

With his poncho forming a tent around him he felt secure in thumbing the button that released the light. The tiny beam illumined the gruesome interior and its contents. Hastily, but with trained thoroughness, Billy June began his examination.

Instantly he started, with an involuntary exclamation of surprise. He knew that the grave from which the body had been taken was marked with a board on which was the name of an American chemist—Jacob Hauser. He had descriptions of Hauser, so complete and minute in particulars as to render identification easy and certain, even so long after death.

But the body that the ghouls had raised and that, for the bribe of the mysterious American, they had exposed in its cheap coffin, was not that of Hauser!

June looked again, more carefully. And discovered one thing sufficient, if he had nothing else to satisfy him that the headboard over the grave bore another name than that which had been borne, during life, by this dead man. It was that one leg—the left one—was noticeably shorter than the other. The flesh on the shin bone had begun to fall away under the rotting cloth of the trousers, and the bone was exposed, showing the discolored traces of an old break and three strands of silver wire that had been used in healing the fracture. The late Jacob Hauser was not a lame man.

No, the investigator said, shaking his head positively, the body thus buried under the headboard of another man, exhumed in the night and the rain under the eyes of a police officer, and searched thereafter by an excited visitor from the States was the body of a stranger. Whose? Why buried in another's grave? Why watched by the police? Why searched by the American? And what, exactly, was the paper which the latter had found with such delight and lost with such bitter grief?

Billy June switched off his light, rose quietly, and hurried away. Outside the cemetery he walked briskly to a near-by corner where a taxicab awaited him and was driven to his hotel. Clad in dry clothes, warmed by a generous fire, and with a drink at his hand and one of his familiar brown paper cigarets in his fingers, June took out the packet he had so fortuitously come upon in the Campo Santos—the cemetery.

At first, when he had seen the body searched, he had thought that he knew what was being sought. And when he saw the American find something and rise he felt that he knew what the man held. Then, when he himself looked on that strange, corrupted corpse, and learned that the man who had been buried as Jacob Hauser was not Jacob Hauser he abandoned that hypothesis at once.

In short, Billy June had come to South America in search of a document of international importance that bore the cryptic number "021". It was a paper supposed to be of tremendous, though unnamed character, and of incalculable value. June knew already that there were several people seeking this missing 021, and he knew that they were willing to take desperate chances to find it and to possess themselves of it.

If the body in the grave had been that of Jacob Hauser—and Billy June had had reasons to suspect that it would not be, though those reasons were little more than "hunches" with him—then the discovery of the paper 021 might have been expected. In view of the fact that another body had been substituted. . . .

June frowned and took the packet from the pocket of his wet coat. He began to think that, perhaps, the plot or conspiracy that had resulted in the changing of dead bodies, or the burying of one body in the grave prepared for another, might be complex enough to furnish any sort of sensation, or surprise, reasonable or un-

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reasonable. Rather relishing the situation he studied the packet for a time before opening it.

It was covered with oiled silk and permanently sealed. There was no writing visible through the stained silk, no mark of identification upon it. Unable, by examination, to learn anything of the contents June ripped it open carefully and shook it. There fell to his knee a small, closely folded piece of very thin paper.

Billy June picked it up and spread it out. Instantly he saw that it was not 021—whatever 021 might be. It was, instead, a small, perfectly sketched map—a map of a small, mountainous section in the central western part of Brazil, in one corner bearing the name of a mining town June knew well. Roads and trails were carefully marked. Beyond the farthest trail, in what was probably the heart of a virgin country, there was a cross enclosed in a circle, and below these words, neatly printed in the hand of a skilful draftsman:

The lode lies within the area indicated above by the circle and cross. The small tunnel we have opened can be found by following these directions: from the bald peak due—magnetic—north four kilometers to the creek bed, thence following blaze to red outcrop on opposite bluff, from where first target can be seen. Through this target will be found second target and from it our three stakes leading directly to lode of 90 per cent. gold.

On the lower margin were penciled notes. June held them under the light and read them with difficulty. Spelled out slowly they carried, at last, this clear message:

If anything happens to me my murderers can be traced by way of the spiral staircase in the rock that you will learn of.

Billy read the last penciled sentence twice, puzzling, then reread the cryptic directions in their finely printed letters. He would have turned to a closer examination of the map thereupon had he not, suddenly, become conscious of the sounds of stealthy footsteps in the corridor outside his door. Instantly he rose, crossed to his table and caught up his beaded tobacco pouch—the gift of an Indian in Arizona, made him long before.

He dropped the map, returned to its oil-skin packet, into the pouch. At that moment his door was flung open. June thumbed a cigaret paper from a sheaf, took a pinch of tobacco out and looked languidly over his shoulder at the intruder.

He was the big, burly, Brazilian officer who had been in the cemetery. His clothes were wet and sodden, his shoes and trouser legs were covered with mud, and he held extended a long black revolver.

"Make no sound, Senhor June," he snarled in a grating voice. "Only be quiet and raise your hands!"

Billy June gave his cigaret a twist and put it into his mouth. He lighted it, nonchalantly, careless of the threatening gun and the hard face behind it. Then he dropped his beaded tobacco pouch into his pocket.

"Oh, don't be an ass, *Capitao* Flores," he said, quietly. "Come in and shut the door. I've been expecting you."

II

FOR a moment the Brazilian was completely demoralized by June's coolness. It contrasted so greatly with his own impetuosity and his gun-play that it made him look foolish, and he knew it. And yet it was evident that he hesitated to put the revolver away. He compromised by shoving it and the hand that gripped it into a deep pocket and sitting down, clearing his throat uneasily.

"Well?" Billy June prompted.

"Well, we desire to know what occurred an hour ago in the Cemetery Campo Santos."

"We do? Why ask me about it?"

"Try no tricks, Senhor June. I was passing near in my machine—I heard shots there and I met an officer of the police who told me that a body had been exhumed and robbed. While I watched, you came out, hastily, and entered your automobile. I followed you."

"I see. About nine-tenths of what you say is a lie. Oh, sit still, now! You don't want to rush around in such excitement, man—you'll get a blood-pressure and die of it! There, that's better. Now tell me the truth, if you want to—and can."

"I tell you what I please, Senhor June."

"And I do the same for you, *Capitao*."

The man uttered an exclamation of impatience. "I shall have to arrest you, June, if you continue to take this attitude," he said, angrily.

"All right, *Dodhino*. Why not?"

"But I do not wish to. I wish to have a friendly understanding. That is much better."

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"And so you start by lying to me! No, it doesn't get over. Arrest me, if you please. But while you're doing that I wish you'd tell me who sent you to the cemetery tonight. I know the rest of the story—or enough of it to do me for the present. You are a police captain, but it isn't part of your regular duties to superintend the removal of a pauper body at one o'clock in the morning, and to go shooting promiscuously when the grave-looters are interfered with. I want to know who's in on this little game."

The police captain puzzled a moment. His temper was short and he was not accustomed to controlling it. But he was no match for Billy June, either with a gun or without, in a physical contest or a duel of wits. He was a very uncomfortable police detective—that was certain and obvious.

"I can't tell you anything, Senhor June," he blurted. "If you will return the objects you and the two workmen took from that coffin——"

"I didn't take anything from the coffin."

"Oh, but I saw you."

"I thought you said you were driving by and that the policeman told you about this."

"That—I was only—I merely——"

June laughed.

"All right, let that slide. As a matter of fact I saw you on top of the wall by the gate and I saw you jump in when the stranger paid the two workmen. And when you started after him you passed close enough to where I was hiding so that I could have tripped you—or shot you—without moving an inch either way. I thought some at the time of doing one thing or the other—but I knew you were a bungling pig and that it would be better to let you hang with your own rope."

"What—what—is that true? Are you——"

"Now, just hold your fire for a minute, will you?" Billy June was drawling, but he was firm. "I don't want any long argument from you, because I'm getting sleepy, and when I get sleepy I get cross. See?"

The police detective was rapidly losing what little nerve he had had when he entered the room.

"Senhor June," he said, humbly, "if what you say can be proved——"

"You had better take the shortest cut to a high wharf and jump off! Exactly. And what I say can be proved, and if you're not a good dog it is going to be. Now quick—without thinking up any *pobre* excuses: who detailed you to the cemetery patrol tonight?"

The man swallowed hard and moved uncomfortably in his chair. Then he said, explosively—

"If I name him you can ruin me, senhor."

"Of course. And if you don't I not only can ruin you just as easily—but—I'll—do—it!"

The poor wretch wiped his forehead nervously.

"I was sent there to see that nothing was taken from that coffin—I was sent to watch for you, Senhor June. And I thought it was you who bribed the diggers—I did, indeed. So I came here before returning to the *Commiseria*."

"And made a pretty average mucky mess of it, too. Um-m. Well, you tell me what I want to know and I'll see what I can do to help you out. I have a notion that I can think up a better alibi for you than you'd ever hatch for yourself. How you got to be a captain of secret police is beyond me. You're just about fit for a job raising *frijoao* with a gang of niggers under you. Come along—pop out that name I want!"

The man's nerve was completely gone now. He sweated like a draft horse and his breath came hard. Billy June sat eying him, half-humorously, half-threateningly. In fact, June's nonchalance was in itself the most threatening thing about him to the unhappy police officer. When he could stand it no longer he leaned nearer and whispered a name.

Billy June whistled.

"Oh, the wind's from that quarter, eh? I see. All right, Captain—now I'll tell you what you've got to do. The thing that was taken from that coffin is in safe hands. It will never fall into those of your high official friend and you can bet your last *dez centimes*-piece on that. Your cue is not to know anything about it at all.

"Go on back to the cemetery before daylight and dispose of that body. Report that everything went off tonight according to the plans and that no one was about to interfere. The two workmen will keep quiet—you can be sure of that. And you can also take my word for it that the man who bribed them won't go to the police

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with his story. As far as I am concerned I'll agree to let you off—for the present. Do you feel any better now?"

The detective rose and looked at his big, thick Swiss watch.

"I am in your hands, Senhor June," he stammered. "I cursed my duty when I was assigned to it, and the outcome of it will probably ruin me. But I can do only what you suggest."

Billy June rose with him and walked close to him, boring him with his brown eyes.

"You can do only what I suggest," he repeated, slowly. "But you are unfortunate enough to have a mean face and a nasty, hang-dog look about you that I wouldn't trust four feet around a corner made of plate glass. I just want to tell you that I don't like your appearance and that I'm going to be on the lookout for you after this. If you try any treachery I'll tend to your case myself and I'll do it *aghoral* You understand that, do you?"

The man tried to smile but his cheeks were pasty.

"I understand you, senhor. You may rely on me."

"But I don't, you see. That's why I'm telling you this. Now drift!"

Capitao Flores disappeared with an alacrity that contradicted his appearance of heavy-footedness. Billy June closed his door cheerfully and shot the bolt. Five minutes later, throwing off his responsibilities and the complexities of the case on which he was engaged as lightly as he had thrown off his dressing-gown, he was asleep.

PERHAPS some of you have met Billy June before—if you have not it may be proper, while he sleeps to tell you something of him and the mission on which he was now engaged. Through the length and breadth of South America he has been known for years as "the trouble-shooter." Freight-team wrangler, mule-skinner, cowboy, prospector, adventurer and mischief-maker, at twenty-three or four Billy June beat his way out of Galveston with a load of thoroughbred cattle being shipped to Para several years ago and Brazil absorbed him.

Having a natural capacity for adjusting difficulties, even though he had to do it with moral suasion that included high-powered rifles and a horny fist, he took on one or two boundary-line and cattle fights in his early days in Brazil, and was so successful in handling them that his services were demanded by others. Eventually the Government heard of him and used him in several matters of importance and of the most confidential nature.

Shortly he found himself making a business of straightening out tangles, dissolving mysteries, finding the lost, confusing criminals, and making himself generally invaluable to a large number of clients who believed firmly that Billy June could encounter no problem too intricate for him to solve.

The number of crooks whom he had thwarted and turned back from the country may never be known. He is the man who caught the high-class criminal promotor, Joseph McAlpin, a few years ago on the eve of McAlpin's departure from Brazil with almost half a million dollars of the money of the West Brazil Development Company, and by so doing saved a high Government official from unmerited disgrace and ruin.

He was instrumental in bringing to a successful termination the revolution of Padre Paolo, in a northern State, when that remarkable priest turned the scale against a tyrannical and rascally governor and sent him and his family into exile. He found and restored a priceless collection of ancient South American jewelry to the Brazilian Government and saved from imprisonment four women of the best families of Rio de Janeiro in connection with that unfortunate and baffling case.

He restored peace between Peru and a neighboring country on one occasion by posing as the adventurer who had stirred up the trouble—and narrowly escaped hanging for his pains. These were just a few of the things he did as the South American "trouble-shooter"—a few of the cases which had earned for him the confidence and friendship of those who employed him.

But South America had lost him within a year, and had expected never to see him again. The declaration of war by the United States had drawn him back to his native land, and he had signalized his going by carrying to completion one of his most remarkable exploits, the diversion from its intended destination of a chest of money raised in South America and forwarded toward Mexico to finance a

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revolutionist *jefe* who proposed striking at the United States itself.

This adventure had brought Billy June perilously near death, but it had won for him a wife and it had carried him to Washington. South America, as has been said, had bidden him good-by.

And then, quite unexpectedly, he reappeared on the *Avenida* and about the hotels and the cafés of Rio, embarrassed by the lavish display of excitement and affection of the Brazilians, still uncommunicative about himself, still drawling and slow-moving, and still "shooting trouble." His wife, he said, had always wanted a chance to learn to keep house, and she was to remain for the present in the States realizing her ambition. He himself did not know whether he would go back to Washington or remain in the continent. He was glad to be at home again. He had his hands full for the moment but might, later, be willing to take on new contracts.

And that was as much as any one got out of him. They did not know of 021.

As a matter of fact, in this whole crowded and curious world it is doubtful whether more than a dozen people did know anything definite about it—and Billy June was not one of them. He knew, to be sure, that there was some such nebulous paper in existence. He knew that at least two powerful Governments were seeking to find it and that one of these Governments was willing to go to any extreme to succeed.

He knew that lives would be counted as nothing in the search, that money would not be stinted in its pursuit, and that even time itself would not be counted as wasted if, at the end, this mysterious thing called 021 were obtained. Aside from that he knew, concerning 021 itself, only that it was a cabalistic series of words and signs contained on a small sheet of paper, and last heard of as being in the possession of one Jacob Hauser whose home was in Erie, Pennsylvania.

Much of this information, fragmentary as it was, had been given him by the chief of a certain bureau in Washington, in confidence. What he had that was tangible in the matter was contained in a letter he had received dispatching him on his present mission to South America. This letter, eliminating only such parts as June himself says are unimportant or confidential, was as follows:

In re conversation had with you this morning, the ——— requests me to give you the following data from our files, with the instructions that you are to carry out at once:

An important paper, bearing the number 021, and being the property of Mr. Jacob Hauser, of Erie, Pennsylvania, disappeared after the death of Mr. Hauser in Rio de Janeiro about the middle of last October. The Department was brought into the case after Mr. Hauser's sudden death, but did not consider the latter important enough for a special investigation until recently.

Concerning Mr. Hauser's mission to Brazil we are informed that he was called into consultation by certain mining interests because of his reputation as an exceedingly successful chemist and metallurgist. We are unable to furnish you with any more definite information on this point, except that the property in point was reported to be known as the Cerro Gordo, located in the State of Minas Geraes, Brazil. Mr. Hauser went to Rio de Janeiro on the ninth of September of last year, and was not heard from after October twelfth.

It is impossible to give you any information as to the nature of this paper, but it may be said that desperate efforts will undoubtedly be made, if they have not already been made, to secure it for another Government, one with which the United States is at present at war. You are instructed that, if you recover the document, it must be turned over at once to this office or its representatives in Brazil for transmission.

As you have accepted the task of attempting to recover this document, please be advised that you are to leave immediately for Brazil, drawing on us for any funds that may be necessary; that you are to consider the mission absolutely confidential until it is completed; that you are to avoid antagonizing the Brazilian Government in any way in your search, and that you are instructed that the task carries with it personal risks the nature and extent of which can only be surmised, but that are known to be very serious. In view of all this you are directed not to carry on your person, at any time, any letters, notes, or papers that would be likely to aid the finder thereof in a search similar to the one you are being asked to make.

Yours very truly,
DANIEL W. TELLSON,
Chief Clerk.

That was all. But it was enough to stir the imagination and quicken the interest of a man to whom mystery and adventure were the breath of life, and June had entered on his search with quiet, dogged, painstaking determination, and—characteristically—with infinite care to see that no steps had to be retraced and that no clues or helpful information should be passed by.

Arrived in Rio Janeiro he had made slow progress. The official records showed that Jacob Hauser, an alien, had died suddenly on the seventeenth of October and, because no evidences could be found to show whence he came nor who his relatives were, and

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because no money could be located either on the body or in bank to his credit, he had been buried as a pauper on the day following his death. His grave was like all the others in the potter's field of the Campo Santos; hurriedly made, shallow, and unmarked save by a small slab of wood bearing his name and his approximate age, set down as sixty.

Billy June was acquainted with the Brazilian burial customs—he knew that the poor who died were only interred if money was forthcoming for ground rent, that often enough the grave was only rented for a short period, at the expiration of which the body was unceremoniously exhumed and cast into a corner of the cemetery. His investigations, necessarily made quietly and without hurry, to avoid stirring up interest or questions, had brought him the information that the ground rent of Dr. Hauser's burial had been paid for six months by an old Spanish professor, for some years retired and living very poorly in the outskirts of Rio.

How he had become interested in the chemist was only a matter of conjecture, although it appeared that the two men had lived together for at least a few days before Dr. Hauser's death. The vexatious part of this line of search was that Professor Reynardo had completely disappeared, and that no one June had found to date could give him any clue to the old man's present whereabouts.

Concerning the Cerro Gordo mining property June learned nothing at all. There was no company of that name in Brazil, no one had ever heard of such a mining enterprise, and communication with officials in the State of Minas Geraes failed to disclose anything at all.

Disappointed but undiscouraged Billy June had taken into his confidence an old friend and invaluable aid, *Capitao* Collares, of the secret police of Rio. Collares, peculiarly well located to pick up inside information, had been baffled in his quiet attempts as completely as had June himself, but at last he had brought to the trouble-shooter one isolated bit of news, namely, that some one "higher up" had ordered that the body of Dr. Hauser should be exhumed as soon as possible, irrespective of the date on which the ground rent of the grave expired.

While this was an unusual thing it was not unheard of. The potter's field was crowded and rental tenures therein were, at best, carelessly observed. But June, vigilant to note the slightest variation from the normal, pricked up his ears. Working through others he learned that the *Inspector das Muertas*, whose duty it was to attend to cemeteries, had no orders on the subject at all, but that they had been issued through the police.

It was then that June had begun a night and day vigil at the grave—a vigil that had ended, on the third night, with the rifling of the grave, the theft from the body of the oil-skin packet, the interposition of *Capitao* Flores and his pursuit of the stranger, and Billy June's later discovery that what had been taken from the unidentified body of a lame man was not the mysterious 021 for which he had been sent south, but a second paper that bade fair to entangle the trouble-shooter in a problem as complex, alluring and baffling as his investigations concerning the document known as 021.

KNOWING this much—as much, in short, as June himself knew to date—we may return to his room in the Hotel Grand de Jalapa about eleven o'clock of the morning following his adventure in the potter's field and, so returning, find him sitting on the edge of his bed, in pajamas and slippers, munching hot toast, toying with three eggs and a bit of ham, and reading a cablegram at that moment delivered. The message was from Washington.

JUNE, Jalapa, Rio:

Our agents in Brazil inform us that James R. Dickson, alias Smithey, is now in Rio seeking permit to exhume body of Jacob Hauser. Unable here to fathom his motives. Forster, U. S. Consulate, can give you data available. Letter following.

TELLSON.

Billy June chuckled.

"Name's R. Dickson, alias Smithey, eh?" he ruminated, twisting up his face. "I've got a sort of feeling that I've met our mysterious friend Dickson. In fact, I think I sat on his ear and took a scrap of paper in an oil-skin case out of his fist last night. Wouldn't be surprised a bit if I did. Where the deuce does Dickson sit in on this game? And why the alias? And what— Well? Come in!"

A bell-boy appeared.

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"Lady to see you, senhor."

"Lady? Me? What's her name?"

The boy extended a card. Billy took it, puzzling. Then he jumped up, made a flying leap for the bath-room, and called back, between gasps and gurgles and the splashing of cold water:

"Tell Miss Hulda Hauser I'll be right down, Paolo. And don't let her get away until I come, either. Do you hear? This is once when poor old slow-in-the-feet Billy June gets an everlasting wiggle on himself! Tell her to wait."

III

THE trouble-shooter—in spite of the fact that he was a married man—knew amazingly little about women. Excepting his wife, whom he had known only a few months and who was entirely different from the average anyway, he supposed that they all giggled when pleased, purred when stroked, and cried when in trouble. Consequently he went down from his room to meet the unexpected Miss Hulda Hauser prepared to find her ready to dissolve into tears and to throw her arms around him in a faint at the slightest provocation.

The moment he saw his visitor he knew that she was not that sort. She was small, fair, extraordinarily lithe and quick in her movements, and with a poise that seemed to indicate a steady set of nerves, complete self-possession, and indomitable will power. And yet she was not at all mannish. Billy June thought she seemed more like some healthy, reliable boy—he liked her from the first, and he felt that he could trust her.

She rose when he entered and stood looking at him evenly. At the same time, in one corner of the *corridór grande*, or parlor, a young man stood up also, watching June. The girl spoke at once.

"Are you Mr. June?"

"Yes," Billy said. "Sit down, Miss Hauser."

The girl turned toward the youth with her.

"I want you to meet Mr. Spilnik, Mr. June," she said. "We are both come to ask help of you."

June crossed to the young man and they shook hands.

"Glad you came—if I can do anything for you," the trouble-shooter said, in his drawling voice.

He had appraised Spilnik with one quick glance—found him a quiet, rather sober young man, with hair and necktie worn a little longer than the usual, and with trousers and mustache worn a little shorter. But there was a quick, friendly smile and an honest pair of eyes to recommend him, and Billy June cared more about those than about fashions.

"Sit down," he said, abruptly. "What seems to be the trouble?"

Hulda Hauser leaned forward.

"Mr. Spilnik and I met on the boat coming down from New York. And as we soon found that we were both traveling to Brazil in search of the explanation of things we—we can't understand—we have become friends. But it was only accidental—our meeting, I mean—each of us has a difficulty of his own. There is no connection between them, you understand."

"I see."

"We were sent to you," young Spilnik said here, "by a police officer, Captain Collares. When we went to the police they referred us to him, and he said, after we had told him what we were in Brazil for, that you would be the best man to help us."

"All right. Collares is a friend of mine. And I'll do what I can."

Miss Hauser interrupted.

"About the expense, Mr. June," she began, a little timidly. "I have only a small amount of money, but I can pay whatever is necessary later—by working——"

"I have no money," Spilnik flashed, rather defiantly, June thought. "I am a musician—perhaps here I can earn something."

Billy June laughed good-naturedly.

"All right," he said, "let's not talk about that now. I'm not a lawyer and I don't get any retaining fee for just listening to troubles. If you want to trust me with yours we'll go as far as we can together without any payments at all. Just shoot the main difficulty and charge the expense to the house."

Hulda Hauser laughed, also, at this, and Spilnik smiled a little. He seemed a melancholy youth, wearied by some anxiety and too tired to laugh. In a moment the girl took up her story.

"I am from Erie, Pennsylvania," she said,

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frowning a little in an evident effort to tell her tale intelligently and briefly. "I have come down to Brazil to find out why my father died here suddenly last October, and what became of his money and some papers he must have had with him. It was only in December that I learned for certain that he was dead—since then I have been working to get money enough to come. There seems to be so much mystery about it all—although I have been here three days I have not yet found out even where he was buried."

For a moment her chin quivered but she held herself firmly and almost at once went on:

"Father was a chemist—a very clever man—and also a metallurgist. He had done a great deal of research work for various big mining and chemical companies and several of his discoveries and his books about chemistry have, I think, really advanced the science. One of his works is used as a text-book in many American colleges.

"Well, some time last Summer he heard from a man who wanted him to come to Brazil to work on a problem in mining, and who offered him a large share in the mine if he was successful in solving the problem they faced. Father immediately said no—that he did not want mining shares and that he could not afford to travel so far without being paid in cash. Finally one of the men connected with the company came to see father at our home. I was there at the time and saw him. His name was Brookley. He and father had several long talks.

"Father kept getting more and more interested—he got quite excited about the proposition. And finally, with a few hours' warning, he told me that he was coming to South America. He said that the whole thing might not develop but that, if it turned out as the mining men believed it would, we might expect a great deal of money from it. He was to be gone not more than two months, he thought, on this first trip, but might have to come back again later and stay longer.

"Father always was a poor correspondent. I never expected to hear from him regularly when he was away from home, and I had gotten used to going for days and days—sometimes for several weeks—without having a line from him. On this trip, though, from the first, he wrote every few days. I won't bother you now with what he wrote, although some of it may help you later and I have all his letters with me. The important thing is that the last letter I had from him was written here in Rio de Janeiro October thirteenth—and I never heard again."

Once more the girl's chin quivered, and once more she conquered herself and pursued her story bravely.

"Father was always careful about what he wrote—he seldom mentioned business and never gave the names of the men or the companies he was associated with. As far as I can remember the only man he wrote me of from here was a Professor Reynardo, a retired college don from Spain, who had once taught mining chemistry in the University of Cordova, I believe, and with whom father became very friendly while he was here. I have not yet been able to find this man, but I believe he could give us some information.

"Now I must tell you the reason why I can not rest until I know more about my father's last illness and his death. When I did not hear from him for weeks I wrote to Washington and asked the authorities to help me. They made an investigation and reported to me that my father had died suddenly here, that he had not had about him any papers or letters that would identify him or that contained any reference to a family or friends, and that, as he had no money, he had been buried in a pauper's grave. I—I could have—if I had only known I might have——"

She paused for a moment, but for the third time controlled herself.

"I know that father was thoughtless about leaving word as to where I could be reached or what should be done for him in case of accident or sickness. I can understand that part of it. But what I can not understand is that one paper—one particular paper—was not found on his body."

BILLY JUNE, following the girl's story closely, found himself on the point of telling her that he knew of that paper, with its cryptic number. But he checked the impulse.

"Take your time, Miss Hauser," he said, lazily, rolling a cigaret.

Spilnik, the young musician, drew out a

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pipe, with his long, white fingers, filled it and began to smoke also. The curling smoke-wreaths rose in the quiet room in sluggish waves and seemed to relieve the tension the two visitors were under. The girl relaxed a little in her chair.

"I hope I am not keeping you too long with this matter," she said. "But I am trying to tell you only what seems to me really important. When I was a baby my father worked out a certain chemical formula that he always said would revolutionize warfare if it were given to any Government for use. I do not know what it was—father never said much about that part of it. But he used to talk to my mother before she died, of what tremendous possibilities there were in this formula.

"He told her that he would never reveal it unless to save the life or liberty of a free nation—mother remembered that phrase of his very well, because in 1897, before the Spanish-American War, he became greatly worked up over the terrible things that were happening in Cuba then, and said more than once that he thought it was almost time that he went to the island and helped those poor people there. I believe he would have gone, too, if the United States had not declared war.

"You see, father believed in this formula of his—whatever it was—and he was a great enough scientist in his own department to know what he was talking about. I have always thought that his discovery was really a terrible and wonderful thing.

"Well, he carried that formula with him night and day, wherever he went. You may not be able to understand why, but it was one of his peculiarities, perhaps. He would trust no one—not even a bank, to keep it for him. And about a year ago he told me, one night, that in some way the officials of a foreign Government had learned that he had it and had sent agents to him to see whether he would sell it. He seemed distressed and a little worried about it, but he soon ceased to mention it and in time I forgot all about it.

"I should never have thought of it again, probably, since he only mentioned it that once, if it had not been for his sudden death here and the fact that no paper—no papers at all—were found in his effects. I do not know that there is anything in my fancy—but I can not help feeling, somehow, that—that——"

Billy June had allowed his cigaret to go out. He had forgotten it. He had forgotten everything but the white-faced girl before him, and the picture she drew of that eccentric, able, altruistic old chemist, holding on to his secret with jealous care to prevent its doing harm but to preserve it for the doing of good if the time came—and then disappearing—dropping out—alone and almost friendless in a strange land! June's fingers tightened.

"You think, perhaps, Miss Hauser—" he began, gently.

"I think perhaps—I think probably, that my father was murdered for his secret, the formula he called Number 021!"

The trouble-shooter looked away, a sudden lump of sympathy catching his throat. He did not believe in sympathy—not professionally. He did not want to allow the girl's preconceptions or theories on the case to sway his own cold judgment. He did not propose to allow himself to become "soft," as he termed it, over the difficulties of a pretty woman. He relighted his cigaret, burning his fingers with the match. He swore softly, cleared his throat, and then turned suddenly on the sad-eyed musician.

"All right, Mr. Spilnik," he said, speaking a little abruptly to hide his own feelings; "let's have your difficulty."

Spilnik started.

"But you have told Miss Hauser nothing, Mr. June. My matter can wait. Are you going to help her? Are you able to?"

June nodded.

"I hope so," he said. "Maybe I can. But as long as you're here we might as well get a rough ground-plan of your affair. If Miss Hauser isn't in a hurry."

"Not at all, Mr. June," the girl affirmed, promptly. "I can understand that it might take a long time to learn anything of my father's death and his affairs. And it seems to me, from what I know of Mr. Spilnik's problem, that it may be more pressing even than mine."

"You see," Billy June suggested, amiably. "Fire easy, though, Spilnik—I'm sort of slow to get things the first time. And I hate to be rushed. Let go."

If there had been nothing beneath June's apparent flippancy it is doubtful whether either of his guests would have had much confidence in him. But it was so patent to them both that he was merely cloaking

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his interest in Miss Hauser's story, and attempting to give her a chance to recover herself, that Spilnik took the cue at once.

"I have come to you," he began, a trifle uncertainly, "because I do not even know exactly what I seek here. I mean to say that I do not know what will be found—what interest or property or reward of any kind may come at the end of my search. It is because I have nothing to go on except something said to me by my brother when he was delirious—dying—in New York last Fall."

"Your brother?"

"Yes. He died on the twentieth of September of a fever. And before he died I arrived to be with him—arrived in time to hear this strange story that I am going to tell you and that has brought me here."

"All right," June said, slowly. "He wasn't at home when he died?"

"Neither of us have been at home for fifteen years, Mr. June. We are Hollanders—Peter, my brother, was an explorer, an adventurer—I was a musician. Our parents were poor, we left our home when we were young. Peter traveled many times around the world—although he was only thirty-six when he died he had been on many expeditions in places where few men ever go. It was in Africa that he contracted the fever that ended his life.

"Well, I know very little about his travels. He always said that he was going to write a book about them, and I think he had, somewhere the materials—the notes and records—to do that with. But I do know that he was a good boy, very honest, very trusting, very friendly with others, and that those traits cost him dearly at times. He was twice defrauded out of his fair share of the money made on trips of adventure—he was always giving away what he had and allowing others to take from him. He trusted too much.

"About a year and a half ago he was in South America for a long time—I think almost nine months. I heard from him once, I think, and he said he was going to stay here until he could come home rich and we could go back to Holland and buy a Dutch palace for ourselves and our old mother. That was what he was always going to do—build a Dutch palace. It was his way of joking. There are no, what you would call palaces, in Holland.

"Well, he came back to the United States, wrote that he was coming to see me and then telegraphed that he had joined an African expedition. The next thing I heard was last September when his friends wired me that he was dying and that he wanted to see me.

"I went at once. I found him very weak. But he made the others go out and then, half-delirious and very weak as he was, he told me the story that has called me to Brazil.

"I tell it just as I remember it, except that my brother spoke only in broken phrases and with much difficulty. He said that he had penetrated farther into South American jungles, when he was here, than any white man had ever been, and that he had found a great treasure here. He and one other man knew of this treasure, which I took to be buried treasure, although I could not be certain. It is what I understood him to say. The other man was Daniel Dercoe.

"Dercoe was an adventurer, like Peter, and they were together a great deal in Brazil and Peru and far south on this continent. When they found this treasure they began to discuss how to make it useful, for it was so far inland that it would take much money to start removing it. They made many plans, but all of them failed. At last they decided to separate and make efforts to get their discovery financed—get money enough to enable them to profit by it.

"Before they left the place where this treasure lay, however, they made two maps, very carefully, so that they could always come back to it and so that, if anything happened to the one, the other would be able to carry out their plans. My brother was a skilful draftsman—he drew two maps on a very small scale—and after they were finished he and Dercoe came out of the mountains and, while Dercoe stayed in Rio de Janeiro to try and interest some one here my brother returned to the United States. But neither of them could succeed.

"They spent all their money trying to get capital, then they became discouraged. Dercoe took some sort of work here and my brother accepted the chance to go to South Africa because there were big rewards promised him if he would make that expedition. They planned to meet here again about this time to return to the treasure and bring at least part of it out.

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"While in Africa my brother lost his map. It was burned up, with his clothing, in a fire that occurred in a brush-house where he was sleeping. He wept when he told me of that—he wept and for a long time he could not tell me more."

Billy June rolled another cigaret, lighted it, inhaled a long puff and blew the smoke slowly out through nostrils and pursed lips.

"I see," he murmured, drawlingly. "That left Dercoe's map—just one in existence, eh?"

"Just one. But I told you that my brother was too trusting. He was. On the African trip he told another man the story—told him about the treasure and the map that Dercoe had. He thought the man was trustworthy, and perhaps he was. I have only my suspicions. At any rate Peter died. I had no money, but I wrote immediately to this man Dercoe. I addressed him as Peter had told me, care of the *Pensoao Mandanha.*

"I heard nothing for a long time. Then after I had written a second and a third time I received a reply from Dercoe saying that he was ill in a sanitarium and also that a man had come to him telling him that he was Peter Spilnik's brother and that Peter had directed him to get the map, as men in New York were ready to finance the treasure-hunt if they could be shown the map. This pretender told how Peter had lost his map—related every circumstance about it. Peter had, weeks before, written Dercoe telling him the same things—therefore Dercoe was deceived and after some talk and argument had given up the map. The man he gave it to was named Hornaday.

"Beyond that I know nothing. I do not know what the treasure was—I do not know where it was—I do not know what became of Dercoe—I do not know what was done by Hornaday, or who he was, or how he knew my brother. I suppose he was the man Peter told of the treasure and the maps in Africa."

Billy June inhaled his cigaret again. There was just a flicker of one eyelid that denoted that he was awake, for his eyes were more than half-closed. He lay back in his chair indolently, motionless. But when Spilnik had finished he asked, slowly:

"This man Hornaday, now—did your brother's friend, Dercoe, describe him any? Tell you anything about him—anything at all?"

Spilnik nodded.

"A little," he said. "Dercoe wrote me about what sort of a man he was—I have the letter at my hotel."

"Say there was anything peculiar about him? For instance——"

"Why, there was this I remember," Spilnik interrupted. "He said Hornaday was lame. One leg——"

"The left leg?" Billy June was still motionless, apparently half-asleep.

Both Spilnik and Miss Hauser moved quickly, and the girl gasped.

"Yes—in the left leg!" she cried. "You told me that, Jan? Remember—you read me the letter."

"Mr. June," Spilnik cried.

BUT he was suddenly interrupted by June. The latter had been watching through the open door an approaching group of three men. One of them was *Capitao* Flores, his friend of the cemetery wall, the other two were secret service officers. June, seemingly drowsing in his chair, had been following Spilnik's story and the movements of these men. And now he saw them at the clerk's desk—saw the clerk gesture toward the room where he and the two Americans sat.

He leaned forward, touching Hulda Hauser's knee.

"Miss Hauser," he said, hastily, "do you think you could trust me?"

She saw that he was in earnest—terribly in earnest.

"Yes," she said, instantly. "I know I could."

"And I feel that way about you. Don't be surprised at anything that may happen. I can help you and Mr. Spilnik. But I can't do anything unless you help me, too."

"Help you? Mr. June, how can I——"

The three officers were entering the room. Billy June tossed his beaded tobacco pouch carelessly across to Hulda Hauser.

"It's a very pretty little bag," he said, quite distinctly. "And when you go back to the States I'd like you to get me one. But I wouldn't take this one from you. You keep it—keep it yourself. Don't give it away."

Capitao Flores, the man with the tricky face, stopped five feet away.

"Senhor June," he said, in his rasping voice, "I am sorry to intrude on your so perfect little party."

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He leered impudently at Hulda Hauser.

"Don't mention it," Billy said, easily. And in Portuguese: "What do you want now, *cavroao?*"

Capitao Flores's eyes shifted under June's threatening stare, but he answered, with an attempt at insolence—

"You are under arrest, senhor, on a charge of robbing the dead."

IV

ON THE morning of this same day, while Billy June was still asleep in his room in the Hotel Grande de Jalapa after his night's vigil in the cemetery of Campo Santos and its *dénouement* beside the coffin, a powerful automobile, grimy and battered but capable of tremendous speed over any sort of roads, left Rio de Janeiro just at dawn and roared out over the boulevard known as *la Rua de Petropolis* westward toward the mountains.

Its driver was a daredevil youth whose highest ambition was to be known as the Eddie Pullen of Brazil, and who did many things distasteful to him only because of his love for the great gray car. Had he chosen he might have told the police much—but he preferred to keep his job at the wheel of that imported German machine.

His passenger, on this particular morning, was a spruce and alert young foreigner known only to the driver as "the lieutenant." The latter had used the machine more than once and the chauffeur knew his love for speed. Therefore, as soon as they had passed the last city street, he "stepped out" and, save for those few occasions when their road led through some small village, and through the towns of Moravella and Petropolis he spared neither gasoline nor tires.

Soiled, hungry, tired, and with arms and fingers numb from gripping the wheel and swinging the stubborn beast of a car over the road, the boy grinned with satisfaction when, at a few minutes past ten o'clock he skidded up to a gate at their journey's end and saw that he had done one hundred and eighty miles in a fraction under five hours.

The place to which they had come, in this mad haste, was the *fazenda*, or ranch, of Senhor Adolfo Andres, known throughout the length and breadth of Brazil as the richest as well as the most brutal and merciless landholder of his time. In Brazil there are many ranches as big as a good-sized American State: nominally they are worked by voluntary and paid laborers and usually, in fact, they are so worked.

But Senhor Andres was one of the old-school *fazendeihros*—he was totally unable to understand the altruistic tendency of modern Brazil and he snorted with disgust at the idea of paying "niggers" to till his fields, herd his cattle, gather his *algodoao*, tend to his *milho* or perform the multitudinous duties of making money for him. He was inclined to begrudge even the sums he paid the callous brutes chosen to oversee his immense gangs—the only money he paid out cheerfully, as far as any one could ever discover, was that which went to his *cangasheiros*.

A *cangasheiro*, not to put too fine a point upon it, is merely a gunman—a hired assassin. He lives softly, does no work, takes his own time and his own ease where he pleases, and is free to carry on any little private vendetta or blackmailing or highway robbery enterprise of his own provided his engagements or activities do not interfere with the plans or projects of his employer.

Sometimes the latter has need of him only occasionally, but in the case of the men so listed on the scant pay-rolls of the Andres establishment there was a good deal of pleasurable activity for the *cangasheiros* and no excuse given them for complaint that life was either dull or monotonous.

For not only did Senhor Andres, that pious and respectable leading citizen, have property greater in extent than the American State of Maryland, requiring more or less constant patrolling and involving its owner in frequent and bitter quarrels with men both on and off his ranch, and not only did he rule his little empire with a hand of blood and iron, but he was constantly and perpetually at war with others.

Sometimes these wars were mere matters of personal disputes, or disagreements over boundaries, or rows over cattle counts or brands or range; sometimes they were clashes with established authority; sometimes they were little forays on neighboring property or into the interior after timber or minerals or men; and sometimes they were intrigues against the Government itself. Andres had ambitions. He ruled his own immense property successfully—from his own point

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of view—and at times he yearned to extend his domain.

Once or twice he had gone a trifle too far in the matter of financing or backing rebellion against the Government, once or twice he had narrowly escaped difficulty with Rio for a too enthusiastic support of plotters and enemies of the republic. Always he had escaped an open clash on charges of treachery or treason, but it must be admitted that the isolated position of his domain, his wealth and powerful connections, and, perhaps most of all, the notorious recklessness and the dangerous character of his gunmen had something to do with that.

Two of the Andres *cangasheiros* were lolling on a little lawn of *capin verde* beyond the formidable gate when the gray automobile drew up, its rear wheels locked. They eyed it familiarly—looked at its passenger. Then one of them rose and unbarred the gate.

"*Como vei*, Senhor Lieutenant," he said, grinning amiably.

"Hello, Pedro," the visitor replied, stiffly. "Are the guests of the *fazenda* still here?"

"Yes."

"I'll go up."

The machine was turned in and whirled up the half-mile drive to the rambling, two-story mansion of Andres. Its coughing engine heralded its approach and when the lieutenant sprang from the tonneau he was met by two men—foreigners, like himself, and a little anxious.

"Well, Lieutenant!" one of them snapped, impatiently.

"It is best we sit down, gentlemen," the traveler replied, courteously. One guessed immediately that they were, in some manner, his superiors, either in rank, station, or class. "I have something of importance."

"Here, then."

The first speaker motioned to chairs on the piazza and the older men sat down. The lieutenant, still standing and making no move to take off either his hat, his big overcoat or his gloves, spoke in their own tongue, hurriedly.

"You have heard that the man, Billy June, is in Rio. On the case?"

They nodded.

"What of that? He is a mere Yankee amateur."

"He is a —— clever amateur, Yankee or not, *Herr Doktor*. Last night, when the body was removed, he was there. Also some one else—Captain Flores does not know who. A stranger from the States, of the name of Smithey. This man Smithey searched the body—and found something. As yet we do not know what. Some packet or paper."

The older men snarled.

"How could that be, Lieutenant? Nothing of importance, of course?"

"How can I say? Let me tell you. *Capitao* Flores followed orders—he thought the man was June and he waited to see what June was up to doing. But, when the stranger had searched the body and found what he sought, Flores stepped in and saw that it was not June at all, but a stranger. The man kicked the lantern over and fled. A few minutes later Flores, who, in the storm, lost trace of the stranger, saw June leave. So June was there all the time!"

The lieutenant observed that he had at last interested the two others and he followed the advantage quickly.

"Flores shadowed June to his rooms, but June foiled him—I know not how. Then Flores went on the trail of this newcomer, Smithey, found his hotel and, while the fellow slept, searched his clothes and room. Nothing. June is to be arrested today—Flores has a faked-up charge—but he will find again—nothing! June is clever—will you believe that now, *Herr Doktor?*"

The two were worried and puzzled.

"But what is there to find, pig? You who attended to that——"

"I only know that something was found—something this man Smithey probably came to Brazil to locate and that he was delighted to lay his hands on. Theiss has a theory——"

"Theiss!" The chief of the trio, Doctor Fast, grunted impatiently. "Theiss can think of nothing but his precious mine map! When we became embroiled in that affair I thought it would aid our own—now I am not so sure."

"Nor I," the lieutenant answered. "Theiss thinks the packet found in the cemetery contained his precious map."

"Let that pass. You telephoned that the chemist's daughter——"

"Is in Rio. She has learned nothing yet, but yesterday she and some melancholy youth who is with her—some nobody she had picked up—the two went to the police.

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They were referred to Collares and he, that treacherous cutter of throats, sent them to June. He was overheard. 'Senhor June can help you if any one can,' he said. Doubtless later this girl will find June and there will be another one on the scent."

"Well, what of that? She can only help confuse it! 'One hound is better than a dozen on a cold trail,' you know, Lieutenant. Why do you come——"

"Doctor Fast," the younger man interrupted, sharply; "will you never consent to believe that this matter may go wrong yet? If I had been heeded at the first and the chemist taken away from Rio——"

"And how?" The doctor thumped his chair arm vigorously, his face purpling. "There has been enough of your criticism, Lieutenant. We were deceived by that jellyfish in the police, were we not, and after your little task at the house of Reynardo—which you performed well enough—we found that we could not get him away, did we not? Are we dunderheads that we do not know as well as you how important it is to have our man where he can be handled?"

"We must find a way now, sir. This Billy June is no common Brazilian secret service man. He knows Brazil as I do my right hand. He is powerful. He is dangerous. And who is Smithey? Is he June's associate? Do we know what we are fighting? I, for one, do not. And if you allow this chemist's daughter to join the search I shall refuse to carry the responsibility any longer."

THE lieutenant's uneasiness communicated itself at last to the others. They conferred for a time in whispers, then the two older men withdrew and talked earnestly for several minutes. Finally Dr. Fast beckoned to the lieutenant.

"The two men at the house—you can trust them?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Telephone them, then, at once. Instruct them—here, closer!"

And he spoke half a dozen sentences into the young officer's ear. The latter nodded and gave a sigh of relief. When he had telephoned his message to Rio he and his driver were given food by servants who came from the kitchen quarters. Meantime Dr. Fast disappeared. When he returned he said:

"Senhor Andres is willing to try a new plan. You are to go back to Rio with one of his trusted men and bring the—the guest here. If we can not get from him then what we want he shall be moved overland, by way of the mountains, to Peru and the coast. There we must take our chances on being able to get him farther. It seems the only way. Can you return at once?"

"Yes. I can do anything, if the plan is made. But I can not stand inaction, when I know that we are being spied upon, watched, surrounded slowly. I fear the man June—not himself, as you can understand, but what he may be able to start moving."

"Will you have difficulty in getting our friend away from the—the place where he is now?"

"I think not."

"The man Senhor Andres sends with you may be relied upon. He is careless for himself—and a dangerous man. You will give him his orders."

The lieutenant smiled, his mouth full. When he could speak, he said, with a sinister snarl—

"I will give him orders to make short work of this hound of the chase, Billy June!"

"You had better not become embroiled if you can avoid it, Lieutenant," the doctor's companion said, in a heavy, hard voice. "Let him follow the scent here, if he will. In this place there is less danger of interference than in Rio."

And he looked about him significantly.

"That is true, as Druberg says," the doctor agreed. "Lure him here, if you can——"

The lieutenant nodded.

"I shall be pleased if I thought I could do that."

And all three of them laughed.

Within half an hour the *cangasheiro* assigned by Senhor Andres was ready, the gray car's nose was turned eastward again and the pleasant ranch of that pleasant gentleman, Senhor Adolfo Andres, with its pleasant guests, were left behind. About five o'clock it rolled into Rio: at five-thirty it began climbing a steep, short grade up one of those hills above the business section of the city whereon are built the numerous beautiful residences of the wealthy and fashionable of the capital.

It followed the winding road almost to

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the summit, turned sharply in through the gateway, its driver nodding to the alert watchman who sprang up to challenge them, and finally came to a stop under the elaborate *porte-cochère* of a mansion. Telling the driver to return to the city and refill his tanks against a possible night call, and beckoning to the *cangasheiro*, the lieutenant strode across the narrow *piazza* and entered.

The Brazilian gunman, grinning his approval of the exterior of this place and smirking in anticipation of what might be found within in the way of soft beds and rich foods, followed his new patron and stood in the door waiting for a light.

But he was not destined to try either food or beds in that house on the hill.

The lieutenant, with a snarling oath of impatience because the corridor was unlit felt his way across toward the light switch, evidently placed near the stairs. Before he reached it the maid-servant appeared. She was so frightened she could scarcely speak and when she did it was in a strained and trembling voice.

"Your pardon, Senhor Lieutenant: a gentleman awaits you in the living-room."

The man stopped abruptly.

"Who is it?"

"He would not say, senhor."

"See here, *muher*," the lieutenant snapped, in a sudden rage, "you have had repeated orders——"

"But, senhor, the gentleman would not hear me!"

"*Estupida!*" The young man was furious. "You shall pay, you stupid—wit——"

He had raised his hand, from which hung his heavy riding-glove, as though he would slap the girl across the face, and she sprang back, with a terrified little moan. But the lieutenant did not strike. A stranger's voice came from the shadows of the curtains leading into the inner rooms, and there was a cold—and a familiar—ring in the voice that made the lieutenant catch his breath.

"If there's any paying done, Lieutenant, I guess it's really up to me to foot the bills. I wouldn't—I don't think I'd make even a bluff at striking a girl, if I were you!"

The lieutenant wheeled, the servant fled, sobbing, and the *cangasheiro* leaned forward, watching the face of the man from whom he had been told to take his orders. That face was the only one that could be distinctly seen in the dusk of the hall, as it was lighted by the beams from a lamp on the stair landing. The rest of the room was gloomy, and only shadows told where the gunman and the unexpected guest stood. The lieutenant was stiff with anger and surprise.

"Who are you?" he demanded, abruptly, in English. "What do you want?"

"Now, don't let's rush along so fast that we lose a wheel or anything," the visitor answered, in a slow drawl. "Take it easy, senhor, and——"

"Billy June!"

"I don't know how you guessed it, but that's me."

The lieutenant, relying on the darkness, turned to his gunman and spoke one word in Portuguese. Two heavy revolver shots, on the second, filled the room with a crashing roar. A man stumbled, cried out, and fell. The lieutenant, struggling with the buttons of his overcoat to reach his own gun, uttered a foreign ejaculation of relief and switched on the lights.

The Brazilian *cangasheiro* lay stretched on the carpet before him, and by the inner door, his black Colt at his hip, Billy June leaned against the wall, a little frown of annoyance on his face. The lieutenant's relief was whirled away in a panic of fear.

Billy June drawled, reprovingly:

"That's the trouble with your kind of swine, Lieutenant—you hire somebody else to do your shooting for you and you always find them too slow on the trigger! Just stick up your hands and come in here—I want to ask you a few questions about Mr. Jacob Hauser, of Erie, Pennsylvania."

V

TO UNDERSTAND why Billy June was thus enabled to form a reception committee of one to welcome Lieutenant Kriege and his gunman to the house on the hill that evening it is necessary to retrace our steps a second time and pick him up as he left the Hotel Grande de Jalapa at noon that day, a prisoner in the custody of the malignant *Capitao* Flores.

It required something a good deal out of the ordinary to surprise Billy June, and perhaps much of his success in "shooting trouble" in South America lay in his ability to meet the unexpected and the abnormal with a kind of automatic mental and physical reaction. Just before the entrance on the

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scene of the police officer, June had been immersed in the tale told him by Jan Spilnik, the musician. The coincidental arrival of Hulda Hauser with the one man who could give him a clue to the mysterious paper that had been taken from the grave in the Campo Santos had surprised Billy almost to the point of demonstrativeness, but he had held himself quietly.

From the very first he had felt that Spilnik's tale concerned the map reposing in its oil-skin case in his tobacco pouch. And some intuition had prompted the guess that Hornaday, who had filched the map from Dercoe by false representations, was the man whose body he had found after its disinterment from Doctor Hauser's grave.

It would be too much to say that the trouble-shooter could supply even a vague hypothesis as to how the two cases presenting themselves to him had come to be thus intertwined—but that they were and that the solving of one might solve the other was instantly apparent to him. And he saw also that, while the new problem offered additional complications, it would, without question, furnish some clues to simplify the puzzle of 021.

But, with his mind on this tangle of situations and possibilities, he was still able instantly to adjust himself to the totally unforeseen advent of *Capitao* Flores. That he and the two subordinates with him were after June the trouble-shooter had no doubt.

He had reckoned that his warning to the police officer, delivered when Flores burst in on him after the return from the cemetery, would be sufficient to keep Flores "lying low." The very fact that the warning had gone unheeded indicated to June that Flores was a man far more desperate and far harder pressed than he had calculated.

That the police captain had no serious intention of prosecuting him on this absurd charge of rifling a pauper's grave, June knew perfectly. Billy was modest, but he knew his standing and reputation with the authorities well enough to be sure that any *bona-fide* charge made against him would have to be pretty clearly substantiated before a Brazilian court would order interference with him.

On the other hand *Capitao* Flores or any other police official could trump up a charge sufficient to give shadow of right to his arrest and search without a legal warrant. Undoubtedly, as June saw now, they had watched him during the morning closely enough to know that he had had no opportunity to put the oil-skin packet into other hands or into a place of safety outside his own rooms in the hotel. What simpler course than a faked arrest, a search of his person, and, meantime, a careful combing of his apartment, and then release, with abject apologies to him.

June had been a little too confident that *Capitao* Flores would not dare move farther after their interview the night before when Billy had called the other's hand. But he wasted no time in contemplating the error of that misplaced confidence—almost automatically he projected their plan when he saw Flores and his companions enter the hotel.

His quick wit saved a ticklish situation. If Flores had found the map June knew well enough that an expedition would leave Rio within the hour, bent on a search for the treasure the location of which that map disclosed, and in a treasure-hunt the first man away has all the advantage. He was convinced also that there were two separate crowds interested in the map: the one for which *Capitao* Flores was acting, the other a more mysterious force represented, for the moment at least, by James R. Dickson, *alias* Smithey.

Both parties knew that others beside themselves were aware of the existence of the map. It was reasonable to suppose that both were ready to take instantaneous advantage of its possession, once that possession came to them. And it was June's task to see that they were disappointed, at least until the rightful ownership to the diagram was determined.

True, he might have turned it over to Jan Spilnik. On the face of the musician's story he was the heir to a one-half interest in the secret, whatever its value might be to him or to others. The lame man, Hornaday, had gotten possession of the paper by representations that Jan Spilnik claimed had been wholly false. Jan Spilnik might or might not be all he represented himself to be. Certainly June had no intention of falling into any such trap as had lost the map for Dercoe.

But he trusted Hulda Hauser intuitively. For many years, as June once said himself, he had preserved his own life and done his difficult and perilous work because he had the capacity for knowing people merely by

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looking at them. And he knew that, in Hulda Hauser, he had met a girl who was stanch, square, free from inquisitiveness, and able to keep her own counsel.

When he threw his tobacco-bag to her he did it with apparent carelessness, but his tone and his eyes had conveyed a message to her that, as he saw at once, she recognized and answered. What he had meant by the action she could not, of course, even approximately guess. But that Billy June was entrusting her with some secret or some valuable item she discerned.

As careless as he she had swung the little, beaded bag from a finger end, in the most casual possible manner, as the officers approached, as *Capitao* Flores made his impudent announcement, and as Billy June suffered himself to be led away, quietly and with a simple apology to the pair who had come to consult him.

Spilnik had been a good deal disturbed by the incident. But not Hulda Hauser. Instinctively she caught in Billy June's demeanor a contagious confidence that the arrest was meaningless—at worst trumped up. June had said, on leaving: "I'll meet you here at four o'clock," and she had believed him and had, with little difficulty, converted Jan Spilnik to her own belief.

Therefore they left the hotel shortly after June and the officers did, crossed the *Avenida* to the Café Antartica and sat down to lunch, over which they idled.

June was not taken to the *commiseria*—the police station. He had not expected to be. He was taken to an inner office in another departmental building and subjected to a search. He did not protest nor threaten. Instead he stood calmly under the hands of the three officers and relieved himself by delivering, in his inimitable and exasperating drawl, what was probably the most vitriolic and sulfurous address of abuse ever spoken in the Portuguese language.

And through it all there ran, as an additional provocative, a vein of ridicule and personal verbal caricature that, in ten seconds, had the trio blazing and panting with a tortured rage. Had they dared they would have quieted him at once with a quick thrust from one of their hidden stilettos. But their risk was great enough in making the arrest and the search, and they knew it. And not daring to strike and knowing that June knew they dared not, increased their anger.

In all probability at least two of them were relieved when the search was ended. Flores was patently chagrined at its failure to reveal anything. He made a last examination of the trouble-shooter's clothing, looked once more through all his papers, and returned them, growling. Then he went away.

His two subordinates waited for June to redress, accompanied him to another room, and there left him to wait—as he had anticipated they would—for almost an hour. A fourth man came finally, apologized profusely in Flores's name, and told June that he was free to go at last.

"All right, *vergonha*," June said, quietly, to this messenger. "I don't suppose you're in on this play, so we won't hold it against you. But the next time you see *Capitao* Flores I wish you'd tell him for me that he'd better be looking for a soft place to light, somewhere outside Brazil, because he's going to be bounced into the cold, cold world before I get through with him, and he's going to go with a swift kick planted where it will carry farthest! *Hasta luego!*"

Knowing full well what he would find—there was method in delaying him after the search of his clothing—June went to his hotel room. It had been ransacked from door to windows and from the bare floor to the ceiling. After examining the most likely as well as the most absurd places, they had finally taken with them the mattress from his bed; June arrived in time to find two panting porters and a flustered and hand-wringing proprietor replacing it with a new one, anathematizing the "*estupido*" police!

But, characteristically they had taken nothing of alue, not even the contents of the false bottom of his steamer trunk.

June only laughed. He scored one more black mark against *Capitao* Flores and his gang, whoever they might be, and hurried down the street to open a line of investigation concerning a man who was beginning to interest him very much—Mr. James R. Dickson.

Dickson, as he soon found, had come to Brazil under the name of Robert K. Smithey, registering from New York at a quiet hotel off the *Avenida*. He had, as a matter of fact, made several efforts, by one route and another, to get permission to exhume the body of Doctor Hauser but had

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been turned down. He was not in his hotel, so June, finding that the afternoon had slipped away, turned up the street to keep his appointment at the Jalapa with his two visitors of that morning.

BUT he did not go far. Suddenly his own name was shouted, in a breathless woman's voice, close behind him.

"Billy June!"

He flung around. Hulda Hauser, too excited to "Mister" him, but calling him as one boy calls another, had run from a doorway, and now she caught his arm and pointed.

"That man who came to see father at home—Mr. Brookley! In that taxi—no, no—the one beyond—turning that corner. Jan Spilnik is in the second one, trying to follow. But he is so inexperienced!"

"Brookley?" Billy June had dropped his drawl. "The mining man who got your father to make this trip?"

"Yes. I would know him anywhere!"

June doubled the two middle fingers of his hand into his palm, put first and little finger tips to his lips and blew a blast to waken the dead. Three taxicab drivers, at three different points along the curb, leaped for their seats. They had heard Billy June signal for quick action before—and the trouble-shooter paid double prices when he was rushed.

"I'll pick them up," he snapped, to the girl. "Don't worry about it for a minute. I'll send Spilnik to you. If I am not at my hotel by nine o'clock, go to Collares and tell him to get in touch with my taxicab driver—the one who takes me. Here he is. His number is 38. Thirty-eight—Collares, if I'm not at the hotel at nine!"

He leaped to the running-board of the machine, snapped an order, and the taxi careened into the middle of the *Avenida*. It was a block away before Billy June had let himself into the cab—then it swung around a corner.

June himself, settling back to catch up with the rapid turn of events while he had the time, knew that his chances of overtaking the mysterious man thus suddenly reintroduced into the play were about even. Hulda Hauser had been right in fearing that Jan Spilnik would be a poor hand at shadow work. But she had overlooked an element Billy June counted on—the driver of the taxi the musician had taken.

And the latter, indeed, proved to be an adept at following, for June's car presently ran alongside and while Billy was taking up the relay and sending Spilnik back, a greatly relieved youth, the two taxi-drivers were exchanging a rapid fire of question and answer. Jan's machine dropped behind, turned around, and disappeared, June's sped on. And twenty minutes later the trouble-shooter was deposited half-way up the steep grade leading to an imposing mansion that crowned a wooded hill and his machine, too, returned city-ward, leaving June in possession of the knowledge that Brookley, supposed to be a mining man, had entered that mansion and dismissed his machine. June went boldly up to the house by a footpath he found, knocked, walked by the frightened girl who faced him, and in another moment was confronting his man.

The latter was a smooth-faced, sharp-eyed individual of forty or fifty-two, well dressed, American in his general appearance, and looking much less like a crook than Billy had anticipated. He started a little at June's unannounced entrance into the living-room.

"Well?" he asked, sharply.

"Well," Billy June said, in his slow voice: "I'm looking for the head of the house. I've got a set of fine little mystery stories, in seven volumes, that I'm selling——"

Both of them had spoken in English. The stranger seemed suddenly to realize it. In Portuguese—poor Portuguese—he replied, tartly:

"I am only a guest, but I know there is no need for books here. You are not welcome. Lieutenant Kriege does not buy from pedlers."

Outwardly Billy June was unmoved—inwardly he felt his pulse beat to quicker time on hearing that name. Kriege—a plotter and spy extraordinary, with whom he had had two previous experiences and with whom he had one old score to settle!

Kriege—the one man June would have suspected of complicity in any dark and treacherous business, the very man to make away with a simple, unsuspecting stranger in Rio provided that stranger held something of value to the Government the lieutenant so ably and slavishly served! Beyond the question of a doubt the key to the mystery surrounding the disappearance of 021 was almost in his hand!

But this all in a flash of thought.

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"I am not a book-seller, senhor," he said, evenly, to the stranger whose name had once been Brookley. "I am here to see the lieutenant on important business. And as he is away, and I don't want to be bothered with you—no, sit still, and don't make any fuss! That's better. Now show me to the telephone!"

His voice had changed; his revolver was in his hand; his face told the astounded man before him that trifling would be suicidal.

"What the devil do you mean?" Brookley cried, leaping back.

"I mean what I say. I'll explain later. Oh, here's the phone."

He saw the instrument hanging behind a curtain in one corner. With a gesture he put the other man before him, took up the receiver and called the police station. Half an hour later, during which time the stranger tried threats, cajolery, pleas and bribes equally in vain, *Capitao* Collares, the quiet, dependable, fearless and energetic little man who had served Billy June in pinches many times, as he had been served many times by June, had taken the mysterious stranger city-ward.

Pending June's orders he was to be held *incommunicado*, a solitary, in a place reserved for political offenders and such men as the *servico segredo*—secret service—desired to isolate—and Billy knew Collares would see that no one, not even his own superiors, learned of the arrest.

June had taken a long chance—he had put away a man against whom he had nothing definite, on the word of a girl almost a stranger and that because she was sure she knew him, after seeing him only once, months before and five thousand miles away. But the mention of the name of Lieutenant Kriege had emboldened June. Little danger lay in arresting any one who had unquestioned *entre* at a house occupied by that gentleman, he thought, and chuckled. Then he called the servant girl.

She was a timid thing, desperately anxious to get rid of June before her master should return, frightened and panic-stricken by the arrival of the police and the removal, in such an unceremonious fashion, of one of her employer's closest friends.

"Why did they take Senhor Theiss?" she faltered, in the midst of June's questions.

"Theiss, eh?" June repeated. "He seems to have several names, this gentleman with the double roll of bills he was so anxious to give away to avoid trouble. Theiss? Don't seem to remember the name. But that will come in time. Now, *muherina*, how many people are there in the house?"

She hesitated, for the fraction of a moment.

"One," she said, then.

"Who is it?"

"Patricia Dominguez, the cook."

"Where is she?"

"She is very deaf, senhor. She is in the kitchen—if the senhor of the police desires to question her I will have to speak for him. She can hear only me—watching my lips."

"All right, we'll get along without bothering her. What time does the brave and handsome lieutenant show up, usually?"

"He has gone to the country. I do not know at what hour he returns."

"Tonight?"

"Oh, assuredly. He is never away at night. He must be here to——"

There she stopped, reddening.

"To—what?"

But the girl's terror was so real and pitiable at this that June was touched.

"Never mind, child," he said, soothingly. "Run along and I'll wait here for him. You can look in once in a while if you think I'm likely to steal the piano or the parlor chairs or anything. Otherwise you needn't worry about me. And I'll see that Lieutenant Kriege doesn't scold you. So cheer up—and here's something for a new handkerchief for the *Fiesta de Nossa Senhora*."

He tossed her a coin and she disappeared, with excited protestations of gratitude. June saw her back with relief, for he wanted no girl servants about when the lieutenant arrived. In fact, he had little time to spare. As he crossed to the window looking down on the city he saw the dusty gray car turn in below, climb the hill tortuously, and swing around the house. In the car, besides the driver, were Lieutenant Kriege and a stranger whose squat, swarthy face and countryman's garb gave Billy June a clue.

"Traveling loaded, eh?" he thought, eying the pair. "Well, I'm glad it's dark in the house—there won't be any advantage on their side, at any rate!"

He unbuttoned his coat and rose to cross to the door, prepared for anything, when the telephone bell rang. For an instant he hesitated as to answering it, but its insistence compelled him. He took down

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the receiver. To his surprise it was the voice of *Capitao* Collares he heard.

"Billy June?"

"Yep."

"Mr. Spilnik is here. His friend, Miss Hulda Hauser, has been kidnaped. About half an hour ago, on the *Avenida*. When can you come?"

June had only time to say, softly but clearly—

"You handle it for the present, *Capitao*—I've got my hands full!"

Then he heard the big gray car's roar quieted at the door.

He hung up the telephone and faced about.

VI

LIEUTENANT KARL KRIEGE was not a physical coward. But twice before he had encountered Billy June, and this third time had begun inauspiciously. From the moment when the servant girl told him that a stranger awaited him until the moment when, having switched on the lights in his own hallway, he saw the *cangasheiro* loaned him by Adolfo Andres pitch to the floor dead and faced the trouble-shooter's steadily held revolver, things had moved rapidly enough and unfavorably enough to shake the nerve of a man more desperate even than was Kriege.

He drew wide of the prostrate form on the floor and his face was pinched and white when he sat down in his own living-room across a table from this enemy. June laid his revolver on the table casually—but the action had menace in it.

"Well, Kriege," Billy June said, sharply. "I'm waiting."

"For—for what?"

"Don't waste time. I want to know what you know about Dr. Jacob Hauser."

"Hauser?"

"Yes."

"I—I don't know any such man."

"You're a liar."

"Senhor!"

"Come on, Kriege, I haven't got all night."

"Suppose I refuse to talk to you, senhor."

"But you're not going to. And you might as well drop Portuguese and stick to English—it may be easier for you to tell the truth in English. You and some others got Doctor Hauser here from the States because you thought it would be safe here to put the screws on him. You wanted his formula—the paper called 021. And Theiss played the game for——"

"Theiss?" Kriege barked. Then he stopped for a breath. "Has Theiss been talking?"

June grinned maliciously, an unexpected path opening before him.

"Theiss is beginning to think that he'd better save his own skin, and let you take care of yours."

"Where is Theiss now?"

"He won't come, Kriege. He's waiting for me. And I'm taking mighty good care that he doesn't break the appointment."

The lieutenant swore roundly and his hands gripped.

"I always thought he was a weakling!" he exclaimed. "Well, I knew through Theiss that Doctor Hauser was coming to Rio—yes."

"So you picked the old gentleman up on his arrival, I suppose, and took good care of him?"

"I met him."

"Then?"

"I had some business with him—mining business."

"What kind of a mine?"

"Why should I tell you, Mr. June?"

"You shouldn't. Because you'd be lying again. Oh, see here, Kriege, I wasn't born yesterday. I know that your Government wanted Hauser's secret and was willing to go to any extreme to get it. I know you and Theiss worked together on it and that you trapped the old chemist into coming here. I know you stalled along with some bunk about a mine until you were ready, and then you moved."

"But you are wrong, Mr. June. We had only legitimate business with Doctor Hauser. We were working with him on a process for handling a refractory ore in some mines in the interior and then, about the middle of October, he died. His death was a serious loss to us because——"

June interrupted, in his slow voice—

"It might have been, Kriege, if it had occurred."

"You mean——"

"I mean that Dr. Jacob Hauser didn't die in Rio on October seventeenth."

"But he did! His burial—Theiss and I were away at the time and did not know of

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it, or his body would have been shipped to the States and ——"

"You know, Kriege," the trouble-shooter interrupted, lazily; "that's where you and your gang of cutthroats made your first big mistake. It gave me your number even before I started from Washington."

"Mistake? I was only saying that we were sorry to find that Doctor Hauser's body was buried in the pauper's——"

"Exactly. And I'm saying that that was what first gave me the hunch that the old chemist is alive."

"Alive? Now?"

"Alive, now! If he had died while you were dealing with him here—while he was working for you in Rio—you would have notified his daughter, or sent the body home—at least you would have seen to the burial. Any fool would know that in the ordinary course of business—straight business—you could not have done less. And that was my first reason for believing that the death story was a canard. Now, I know it was."

The lieutenant gripped himself and tried to laugh amusedly, but the laugh was a poor imitation.

"Supposing that I knew something about Doctor Hauser and his affairs, Mr. June, and supposing what you have said was true—do you mind telling me how you know now that Doctor Hauser is still living?"

"Not at all. I know it because a dead man could not tell you what you got Doctor Hauser here to find out. A dead man could not give your Government a formula. That paper that the chemist called nought-twenty-one you failed to get hold of. Hauser wouldn't tell you his secret. Your Government was pressing you. Your only recourse was to get Hauser into your possession where you could do what you liked with him—bulldoze him, say, or starve him, or even torture him. Your people didn't want Hauser—dead or alive—they wanted his formula."

"But how do you know, as you say you do, that we failed to get possession of that paper?"

Billy June laughed and shrugged.

"Because you and your gang are still here," he said.

"But I—don't see——"

"No, I don't suppose you can. You're a great little plotter, Kriege, but your plots go wrong because you haven't any imagination. You can't see the way it looks to the man, like myself, for example, who happens to be on your trail. It amuses me to put you next to this—because this is about the last chance you're going to have for plots of any kind for a long time and it will be interesting stuff for you to think over when your prison work is done and you are bored."

Kriege snarled unpleasantly.

"You threaten, Mr. June!"

"No. I'm just telling you about it. If Brazil doesn't jail you—and I think she will before I get through with you—the Government at Washington will, even if I have to kidnap you and take you up there to make it possible. So you can just put that down.

"Now, about Doctor Hauser. If you had found his formula you would have set out hotfoot for home with it—and they would have given you a leather medal and kissed you on both cheeks and made you an alderman or something for reward. Doctor Hauser would have gone back to Erie, Pennsylvania, a sadder and a wiser man, with his nought-twenty-one reported as missing. He would have told his troubles to the American officials and they would have written letters to the Government here at Rio and there would have been a nasty row—and that's all.

"But none of those things happened. The one thing I'm waiting for either you or Theiss to tell me is—where——"

With a click ominous to Billy June the lights of the room were suddenly switched off. Kriege, with a triumphant cry, leaped to the table—June could hear him—his own hand touched that of the lieutenant as both of them clutched for the black Colt that had, a few minutes before, done for the *cangasheiro* from the Andres *fazenda*. June's luck and quickness failed him this time—Kriege won the gun.

"*Bien!*" the lieutenant shouted, exultantly, in Portuguese. "I have his revolver—give us the lights!"

The electrics were switched on—and Billy June found himself, for one of the few times in his career, his back to the wall, his hands and his holster empty, and three hostile weapons, one of them his own, in Kriege's hand, leveled at him.

Kriege's relief was almost childlike. He laughed loudly, his shoulders shaking, and he beamed on the two new arrivals with an affection that was ludicrous.

"*Gue buenol*" he exclaimed, happily.

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"You, my good friends, are most welcome. We have more than one of the rats in the trap!"

In his exultation he might have gone on and illuminated that remark had not one of the two men in the room grunted warningly and jerked a thumb over his shoulder. June, watching and listening for clues thought for a moment of the telephone message concerning the disappearance of Hulda Hauser. But Kriege had been away all day, if the appearance of the big gray car counted for anything, on a long, hard trip—June judged that Hulda had fallen into other hands. He eyed the two men who had come in so abruptly and so inopportunely, for him.

One was a common Brazilian gunman, of the type similar to that of the man lying dead in the hall outside. The other was of Kriege's nationality, with a deep scar across his face that gave him a sinister and savage expression but who, in spite of this, seemed a fairly human young fellow. In a few words Kriege told them how he had come home to find June there, of how the Andres henchman had been "murdered" by the trouble-shooter, and that Theiss had been corrupted by June.

Kriege's countryman laughed.

"He is a clever rascal, this June," he said, rather admiringly. "You do not know then what the maid says—that Mr. Theiss was arrested in your house here this afternoon by our friend across the table?"

"What?" Kriege shouted. "Is that true, June?"

"True as life."

"You sneaking devil!"

Kriege fairly shook with rage. For a moment it seemed that he might plunge forward and end Billy June's career at once. But a whispered sentence from his calmer subordinate checked him. They exchanged rapid question and answer and Billy heard a reference made to "the deep well." Whatever that was it was plain that his chances for escape now depended on good fortune alone, and he gave a passing thought of regret to the circumstances that had made it impossible for him to run through the house and learn its floor-plan and find its exits as a help in meeting this emergency. Instead he had nothing on which to rely save what he called, humorously, "the June luck."

"I had it coming," he soliloquized, with a slight grin that patently surprised his captors.

But he did not worry—it was too early for that as yet.

Presently Kriege turned to the Brazilian, who had stood silently against the outer door, his gun held steadily on June.

"You will watch for a while," he said. "If this man moves, drop him." And added, angrily: "I hope he moves, for I know you are a dead shot!"

THE Brazilian grunted at the compliment and nodded. Kriege and his associate went out. June could hear them dragging the body of the unlucky Andres *cangasheiro* toward the back of the house, then silence settled on the gloomy place. Billy sat down easily on a chair arm.

"The lieutenant coveted my gun," he said colloquially to the ruffian eying him half a dozen paces away. "You can search me if you want to—or shoot me, either one. But I'm going to have a smoke."

The man made no answer. June accepted his taciturnity as indicating his willingness to risk a duel, and proceeded to delve into his vest pockets for his brown papers and familiar, friendly sack of American cigaret tobacco. The strong narcotic tasted good. Billy relaxed, knowing that it would be useless to spend time in conjectures on what he would or could do next, or on what he might have to do. It was a case of waiting until the cards turned.

Kriege and his subordinate came back after a quarter of an hour and it was evident that Kriege was not yet certain what he would do with the undesirable captive.

"For less than what you did here this afternoon," he muttered, angrily, "I would kill you like a snake."

"Fair enough, Kriege," Billy drawled, in English. "You're three to one, and you've got all the shooting-irons—why make a speech about it?"

"I want to know where Mr. Theiss is."

"You do?"

"I do. And if you don't tell me I'll try a way of making you! You think you have him as a hostage for your own safety and that I do not dare act against you until he is freed. Is that what you think? Well, then, I tell you that I'd sacrifice Theiss and a thousand like him to put a stop to your treacherous activities!"

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"I guess, for once today, that you're telling the truth," June answered, with irritating nonchalance.

If he could bring about a personal quarrel with Kriege and make him lose his temper he thought he might gain a slight advantage in the extremely disadvantageous position in which he found himself. And his sneering tone was well calculated to have that effect.

"Don't say that again!" Kriege shouted, leaning forward menacingly. "I've more than one grudge against you—and calling me names will not lighten your punishment."

"I'd be scared to death," June retorted, tauntingly, "scared to death of your threats if I didn't know what a liar you are, Kriege!"

"What? You dare?"

He flushed crimson and his hands trembled. With June's own revolver held ready he moved slowly around the table toward where the trouble-shooter sat quietly, his back to a heavy door over which hung portiéres.

"Why not?" June demanded. "If you order these gunmen of yours to shoot me you know perfectly well that you won't get out of Brazil alive—you nor either of them. And alone you haven't the nerve to kill me. A liar is always a coward!"

Kriege was so enraged that he trembled. In another breath he might have raised the revolver and fired its heavy charge into the taunting face of the trouble-shooter. His associate, whose revolver butt protruded from its shoulder holster at his coat lapel, stepped a little back to be out of range of Kriege's cross-fire, and the ruffian who had come with him looked to him and from him to the crouching Kriege, unable to understand the English that was being flung back and forth between the others, but alive to the situation.

June saw all of the tableau with a mind as cool and calculating as though he had been playing bridge instead of a game of life or death. He stood up deliberately and took a sidewise step toward Kriege, who was at the table corner, the gun in his hand coming steadily higher.

"You're going to make a beautiful leading man at a hanging for this, Kriege," he drawled. "If you'd put down that gun and give me two minutes of time I'd be delighted to hand you the darnedest licking a land-pirate ever got in history! But I suppose, without a gun, you'd be——"

Kriege straightened, threw back his head and suddenly hurled the revolver aside.

"Without a gun?" he repeated, in a shrill scream. "I do not need a gun, you mouthy Yankee!"

And with all his strength he lunged a tremendous blow at the mocking face of Billy June.

The answer he got came like a flash of light. June stepped to the left, snapped his head aside to avoid the pile-driver blow aimed at him, and with a hooking left-hand swing caught Kriege under the right ear. The blow sent the tall lieutenant reeling sidewise on to the table, bringing him between the gunman and the captive. Before the youngest of the three could pull his revolver June had jerked down the curtains above his head and, in their fall, had covered his own dive for the knob of the hidden door.

The knob turned, the door gave, and Billy stumbled into the room beyond as the scarred-faced man's revolver cracked. Kriege, only half-recovered from the blow he had received, plunged after him and June kicked him, once, in the stomach and sent him to the floor as the Brazilian, wasting second-fractions maneuvering for position, fired. One bullet grazed June's shin-bone, but he only laughed at them—laughed exultantly, as he ran.

He heard their feet in the room he had left—heard their shouts and the sharp orders of Kriege's friend with the gasping screams of the humiliated and suffering Kriege himself. Across the inner room, through another door, along a corridor—up a flight of stairs—along another corridor—and even as he went, and even as he heard some one pounding up behind him, Billy June had time to see, in that upper corridor, one door which was fastened from without by a heavy chain and padlock! Risking breath and time June shouted:

"Doctor Hauser! Doctor Hauser!"

He ran on, but from within that padlocked room he heard the sound of some heavy object dropped to the floor, a table or chair overturned, and a quavering and piteous old voice answer:

"I'm here! Help me! They have me——"

There was no breath of time for delay now for Billy June. Pursuit behind him was desperate—he knew that they would shoot him down like a mad dog if they could come up with him. He saw a descending stairway ahead and turned down that. It was

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evidently a servant's passage, for it led him through a pantry at the bottom and out into the dining-room.

Some one of the three pursuers had turned back on the front staircase and was booting it down to cut him off from the front of the house. Billy turned to the left again and dived through another door, slamming it after him recklessly, trusting himself now to the June luck—his only hope for life.

And his luck held. The gloomy dark hall in which he now found himself—a long room hung with dark pictures and having no furniture to tell that it had a use—had three doors, one on either wall and one at the end. The door June chose, at random, was unusually heavy on its great hinges. As June wrenched it open his hand fell on a bar on the outer panels. He plunged through, pushed it shut, and instantly raised the bar and dropped it into its iron catch.

He was in total darkness. A damp smell came up to him, his foot touched stairs leading downward—circular stairs. He felt his way down several steps, listening and breathing deeply but noiselessly.

Then, from beyond that barred door he heard the voice of Kriege, half-choked with pain and anger.

"No, no, you fool—beyond! Straight through. He's gone toward the rear! That's the stone-stairs door! Oh, curse that dog! He will go clear yet! Get out behind the house! He ran that way!"

Billy June began once more cautiously but rapidly descending. His fingers, held out against the outer wall of the spiral, touched cold, wet stone. The air was heavy with a dank chill. And into the trouble-shooter's mind came, unbidden, the penciled words he had read on the map taken from the body of the lame man the night before:

"If anything happens to me my murderers can be traced by way of the spiral staircase in the rock, that you will learn of!"

VII

TO THOSE whose travels have taken them to Rio de Janeiro, in many ways the most beautifully situated large city in the world, will remember the imposing residences that crown some of the hills above the business section. Some few of you may have been in those homes and if you have it is possible that you have entered by way of a tunnel cut from the avenue below into the heart of the hill and leading to an elevator shaft, up which you were taken to the house itself.

And it may have occurred to you that, in the days before elevators were in common use, stairways built in the rock would have served the same ingenious purpose and saved the climbing of the steep hill-roads outside.

As a matter of fact, Billy June had stumbled blindly into one such exit—and when he reached the bottom of that significant spiral stairway cut in the solid rock he understood why he had found the door at its head unbarred. At the bottom, after racing through the short tunnel, he came on heavily barred gates. To his surprise these opened to his hand easily. But when he had passed through and closed them he found they had caught with a spring lock that made it impossible to open them from without—the street side.

The explanation was that Kriege and his friends had one exit preserved for emergencies—an exit that was not an entrance. It was this exit that had served his need.

Before he had time to ruminate on his close call of the evening he was in his hotel rooms again, whirled thither by a chance-passing taxicab, had telephoned for *Capitao* Collares and Spilnik and had ordered a meal sent up "in haste." Then, while he washed and shaved, he began recollecting his thoughts on the cases that had already given him so many new pages for his adventures in real life.

He had not forgotten Hulda Hauser—neither had he lost sight of the fact that the hiding-place of her father, the unfortunate old chemist, was now most certainly revealed to him. Not only did this new knowledge—he had not a moment's doubt that it was the chemist and no other who from behind that barred bedroom door in the Kriege house had answered his call—not only did this knowledge greatly advance his search for formula 021, but June saw at once that his possession of it effectually checkmated Kriege and his crew.

So long as one man, opposed to them and their plans, knew that Dr. Hauser was alive and that he was held a prisoner in that house on the hill, it would be foolhardy for them to do him any harm. Moreover, it was another compelling reason why they

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should also take the most particular care of Hulda Hauser—if it were they or their confederates who had absconded with her.

As Billy put a forty per cent. overload of hot food into his mouth he chuckled mirthfully.

"There's one mighty good bet floating on this case," he thought; "and that is that what the diplomats call the *status quo ante* will be preserved with an attention to details that must give my gentle friend Swine Kriege a severe pain under his belt!"

Obviously the life most certain to be jealously guarded, no matter what happened, was that of Dr. Jacob Hauser. So long as the old man kept his precious secret from the Kriege gang the worst he could suffer would be torture. And even torture would, necessarily, be of such nature as not to jeopardize the old man's well-being. Secondly, it seemed equally certain that nothing would be done immediately to hurt Hulda Hauser.

The men who held her—undoubtedly associates of those who held her father—were not vicious criminals but cold-blooded conspirators. If any gain could be netted them by a death they would vote death without a moment's hesitation—but they must first see the gain. And in this case there could be none, not yet! Some of them knew now that June was on the trail—and Kriege knew that he held most of their secrets, including the whereabouts of Dr. Hauser.

They knew also that the mysterious James R. Dickson was in the case, and from *Capitao* Flores' actions in the cemetery June concluded that Dickson was not connected with the Kriege outfit. The man Theiss—a very valuable pawn in June's game, undoubtedly—was much more likely to be on Dickson's side of the conspiracy, for they were both Americans and men much alike in general make-up. All of them must know by now that the oiled-skin packet found in the cemetery had fallen into June's hands. They knew that *Capitao* Collares, a prominent and powerful member of the secret service, was a confidante of June's.

If there had been no others in touch with their operations those mentioned were sufficiently dangerous so that the gang would be deterred from making away with Miss Hauser, or seriously harming her. Your conspirator is much more likely than your criminal to anticipate and to seek to avoid ultimate consequences. June thought he saw their game. They proposed playing the girl on her father.

Either by inducing her to send him a message that would cause him to give up his secret in exchange for her freedom, by promising them both freedom for the formula 021, or, finally, by threatening, or even torturing the girl before the old man's very eyes, they might well hope to win what they had risked so much to gain. For the present, then, Hulda Hauser also was safe.

But a contingency presented itself. June frowned. Then he rang a bell. A boy answered.

"Do you know Pedro Lopez, the taxi driver?" June snapped.

"Yes, senhor. His machine is standing across the *Avenida* now."

"Get him up here, quick."

The boy disappeared. June crossed to his trunk, opened a secret drawer in its false bottom, and took out a roll of bills. Then he went on with his meal until the driver appeared. June tossed him two large bills.

"Want 'em?" he asked, casually.

"Why, *seguramente*, senhor!"

"All right. Take 'em."

"But for what?"

"A little friendly service. Remember what you did for me when I was trying to keep Madame Carnot from moving her trunk out of the *Biehra Mar* apartment house a year ago?"

"Yes. I am to watch a house."

"You are to watch the white house that stands on the hill at—" June named the location of Kriege's residence. "Let me know whether a man is taken from the house—an old man—probably sick, and where he goes. That's all. You can have all the help you need and you can refer them to me for their money. I'm sending you, as I did before, because the Rio police have small ears and large mouths."

The man laughed, proud of his commission.

"And I do not report——"

"You don't report until you have something to say. *Adios!*

"By jiminy! I almost overlooked my hand there!" June exclaimed, when the man was gone.

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And he turned to his meal and the contemplation of the *status quo*.

Neither Dr. Hauser nor his daughter, he summed up, would be injured for the present. In addition June had another strong card—the man called Theiss; the man Hulda Hauser had recognized as Brookley. How important this card was June had not guessed before his talk with Kriege. But now he saw.

Playing Theiss against the lieutenant June had won considerable information. Reversing the process would certainly add to the store. And with Theiss in jail—in a sub-station from the jail from which it would take mighty influence to move him—the free members of the gang would move softly and circumspectly, anticipating the worst.

GRATIFYING as his success had been to date June still saw clearly that he was not only just beginning to find out what he must know, but he saw that the search for formula 021 was much more complicated than he, or any one else, could have anticipated. And projecting all the difficulties of that case June did not for a moment overlook the fact that its investigation had led him into one, apparently somehow intermingled and intertwined with it, that presented fully as many baffling angles—the case of the oilskin packet and its mysterious map!

He smiled, remembering that Hulda Hauser had said—

"Mr. Spilnik and I both have troubles, but they have nothing to do with each other—they are two different cases."

"Maybe and maybe not," June said—and called out to welcome *Capitao* Collares and Jan Spilnik.

The police officer was a short, slight little Brazilian, very intelligent, very trustworthy, and very highly considered by powerful political influences in Rio de Janeiro. Years before June had found himself compelled to make a friend in the bureau of police. His experience had taught him that the Rio department, like others scattered about the world, was composed partly of out-and-out rascals, partly of politically favored incompetents, and partly of genuine police officers, capable, aggressive and incorruptible.

Seeking one of the latter he had chosen Collares and had deliberately made advances that had resulted in a fast friendship between the two men. Now as never before did June thank his beneficent stars that he had the police captain to count on. Another officer of equal rank with Collares, Captain Francisco Flores, had shown already not only that he was a crook and a dangerous one, but that he was working either with or for a powerful superior.

When June had questioned Flores as to where he received his orders to watch the disinterment of the body in the potter's field the captain had named Carlos Avelina, a politician well known in Brazil: best known, perhaps, for his success in what were announced as "investments" he had made since being in the bureau, and for his penchant for engaging in cabals and conspiracies to better himself. June knew just about how far this higher-up could go.

The satisfying thing was that neither Avelina nor *Capitao* Flores would be able to accomplish anything, great or small, if *Capitao* Collares and those who trusted him in the department and in the Brazilian Government were to suspect them. And now June was going to have to use Collares and use him hard.

Jan Spilnik, the Dutch musician, was a pitiable sight. His young face was drawn and new lines appeared on it. He clasped and unclasped his hands continually and moved restlessly about the room while June and Collares held a brief whispered conversation about the disposition the captain had made of the prisoner, Theiss. June felt sorry for Spilnik, but one of his maxims was to give worry and grief something to do and they would wear themselves out.

"Now, Spilnik," June said, in his easy, care-free drawl; "let's start at the beginning and hear what happened to Miss Hauser."

The musician was holding himself in, but his voice broke a little when he spoke.

"It was my fault, Mr. June—what occurred. I should have known that she was in danger—that she might be annoyed or followed or attacked. I might have known it—and I left her standing in the street and went—like a stupid pig that I am, thinking nothing of others than myself——"

"All right," June interrupted, dryly; "all right, I get that much. We'll set aside next Thursday afternoon, from two to

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four, for cussing ourselves about the thing. But right now let's get busy."

Spilnik laughed feebly.

"That is good sense, and I am a fool, Mr. June!" he said.

And straightening his shoulders he plunged directly into his story.

"When I returned after your taxicab overtook mine this afternoon, Miss Hauser and I decided to violate your orders and go to Captain Collares at once, instead of waiting. I do not know whether we did wrong or not, but Miss Hulda was terribly worried and frightened—for you. She thought she had no right to ask you to take risks for her, any risks, and she did not know exactly how desperate the man Brookley—Captain Collares says his name is Theiss—how desperate the man might be or into what trap he might lead you. Well, when we reached the station of the police Captain Collares was out."

June leaned forward.

"You didn't tell any one else your troubles, did you?"

"No. We dared not do that—knowing so little of conditions here. We left the station and walked down the *Avenida*, talking about her case and trying to think of something we might do to help in unraveling it. She had the address of the old Spanish professor her father had known here and we thought we might try to find him again. So we did."

"Tried, you mean?"

"No, we found him."

"Found Reynardo?"

"Yes."

"Well, now if that don't beat three queens and a pair of nines! I've been looking for the old gentleman myself for two weeks and here come the babes in the woods—excuse me, Spilnik, let's amble along with the procession. Where'd you find him?"

"At his house."

"It was locked up tight as a Scotch dominie every time I went there! Go on!"

"We presented ourselves and Miss Hulda told who she was. The gentleman required proofs. He was greatly excited. Miss Hauser showed him her card, tickets, and letters—then she showed a part of one of her father's letters—the part that referred to Professor Reynardo and their acquaintance. Immediately Reynardo jumped up from his chair—he is a very excitable man, and peculiar—he jumped up and began to talk very fast in Spanish.

"We had to interrupt him, for neither of us understood him. And just then he was called out. So, greatly to our disappointment——"

"Called out?"

Spilnik nodded.

"Yes. A servant came—a man-servant of some sort—and said that others wanted to see Reynardo. Reynardo became cautious at once—put his finger to his lips—begged us to be very quiet until he could learn what was wanted—and left. We sat waiting, talking about the professor and wondering why he was so greatly moved at seeing——"

Billy June stood up. With one of those rare quick movements of his, and interrupted with words that cracked like a whip.

"Wait. Did the professor come back?"

"No."

Spilnik seemed deeply puzzled by June's actions and stared at him, answering awkwardly.

"You didn't see him again?"

"No. The servant came back presently and said we would have to return in a few days—the master was——"

"Collares!" June wheeled.

The Brazilian had already risen and crossed to the outer door.

"Yes, senhor."

"If ever God gave you speed use it now. Get to the address—" June gave it, on a quiet street in a suburb of Rio—"get there with one or two men. And fly, man, fly! Can you see it?"

The police captain nodded.

"I see, June. I am away!"

And he was. They heard his flying feet, the slam of a distant door, a whistle at the curb, the roar of a taxicab, and—

"Mr. June," Spilnik cried, "what does all this mean? Am I mad? Or are you?"

JUNE had dropped back into his chair, pulled out papers and tobacco and begun rolling one of those cigarets without which he could not face any baffling or alarming situation. He sat rolling and rolling the cigaret, as deaf to the musician's cries and excitement as though Spilnik were leagues away. Mystified and a good deal frightened Spilnik stood at the window watching *Capitao* Collares' taxi-cab as it tore up the street, stopped to pick up two other men, and whirled

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westward around a corner. At last June, returned to his old drawl, said casually:

"Don't pay any attention to me, Spilnik —I'm crazy as a tenor opera singer myself. Let's slide along with your story."

Spilnik, shrugging his broad shoulders as though he were expressing complete inability to fathom anything that June did or said, cleared his throat nervously, crossed the room again, sat down, and faced his interlocutor. With a determined effort he suppressed his curiosity and anxiety and proceeded.

"As I was about to say, the professor sent word back to us by his servant that he was unexpectedly detained on important business and that he would like us to return in four or five days, as he might have to go away for a short time. We left his house satisfied of one thing only—that Professor Reynardo had some important information to convey to Miss Hauser. What, of course, we could not guess. And it was when we returned from that mission, and had reached the *Avenida* that I forgot myself and showed myself to be unworthy——"

"Next Thursday afternoon, from two to four for that stuff," June reminded him, calmly. "What happened?"

"Your pardon! We came to one of those shops where tobacco is sold—an inside shop—not like a States cigar counter. I was nervous and worried—I thought that a cigar would do me good. So I went in, leaving Miss Hauser standing at the curb."

"I get you—waiting at the church, while you flirted with Lady Nicotine!"

"I felt that I needed the smoke—yes, sir. When I was lighting the cheroot recommended to me and turned to go out a man accosted me, asking some question I did not understand about cigarets. I told him I spoke no Portuguese and he apologized and spoke in English. It was something trivial—it doesn't matter——"

June's eyes were bright.

"No, what he said doesn't matter. But what he looked like may—later."

"Why. He was only a chance passer-by, Mr. June——"

"Sure?" Billy June asked the question dryly. "All right, mebbe so, mebbe so. Then what happened?"

"I talked to him just a moment. Then I went out into the street. And I saw a taxicab whirling away, with two men in it and a woman. I looked about for Miss Hauser. I asked a street boy. He said the lady's father and uncle had come for her and were taking her away to a convent from which she had escaped. Instantly I knew—she had been kidnaped. I was right—was I not? You think that was it, Mr. June?"

"I think you had a good hunch. And I think I know who did it and why. But first, while I think of it, did your friend in the cigar shop delay you any when you started out to the street?"

"No. That is, now that I remember it, he asked me for a light for his cigar and I waited to give him that."

"Just so. Just so. And gave the men outside another minute to make good their get-away in. Hello—what's this?"

Capitao Collares appeared at the door of the room, his breath coming fast and his eyes narrowed.

"Senhor June," he said, with a formality and forced calmness that betrayed his perturbation to the trouble-shooter; "I am sorry that I did not this afternoon question Spilnik about his visit to Professor Reynardo. I might have been in time, thus."

"In time?" June snapped.

"In time. I picked up two men just from the *commisseria* on the corner above. They brought the news."

"Well?" June queried, settling back in his chair.

"*Doutor* Reynardo, the professor, was found dead in his yard about an hour ago. Murdered, in cold blood!"

VIII

JAN SPILNIK gave a frightened and horrified cry and sank back into his chair. Billy June crossed to him and jerked him forcibly to his feet.

"Now, Spilnik," he said, curtly, "this isn't the time for motion-picture melodramatics! Your nerves are jumpy—you can't get your mind off Miss Hauser! Isn't that your trouble?"

"Yes! If they would murder that poor old professor——"

"Exactly. But they had good reason to murder him, as they saw it. And they have the best reasons in the world for not shooting Miss Hauser—or doing anything

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in the world but take particular care of her. I know this—I can't take time right now to tell you how. You've got a job on your hands beginning in something under five minutes and I want you to take a brace and be ready to handle it. Can you do it—or will I have to drop you out altogether?"

"I? If there is anything I can do——"

"There is. Are you man enough to tackle it? There may be some danger attached—but it means a good deal to Miss Hauser and her case."

June had sounded the right key-note for Jan Spilnik. The musician straightened and took a deep breath.

"If you can trust a simpleton, Mr. June," he said, abruptly, "I'll do anything you order."

"That's spoken like a white man," June returned. "Listen carefully, then."

"I am listening."

"For the moment I can't bring the police into this case officially at all, Spilnik. There are a number of reasons. We've got to go it alone—with *Capitao* Collares. In ordinary circumstances I'd put the secret service on to Miss Hauser's trail and find her. Personally I'm going to be busy for a while at least with something more important. Therefore I'm going to use you."

"For what, Mr. June?"

"To find Hulda Hauser."

"Me?" The Hollander gasped. "But I have no more—" Then he stopped abruptly, seeing Billy June's calculating eye on him. "All right, Mr. June," he gulped. "I'll do my best."

"Fair enough! That's all any one can do, as the undertaker said when he closed the coffin. I realize how little you know of Rio and Brazilian customs and the Portuguese tongue, and I can't send you out alone. But here is my card, with a penciled note on it. Take it to the office of the *Jornâl Diario*, the newspaper, and ask for a reporter named Weekes. Sammie isn't much to look at, but he knows Rio like a book, and his brother, the Associated Press man here, has more influence than any one except the President himself.

"Tell Weekes that Miss Hauser is my client in a case I'm working on and that she was kidnaped. Tell him what you told me this evening—in short. He'll probably start at that cigar store and he'll work fast and intelligently. You'll catch on to his system shortly and my hunch is that you'll find the girl.

"Tell Weekes to use his own discretion about trying to rescue her—I'll hope to have the more dangerous members of this gang rounded up before you get very far so that it won't be so risky for you. But if you find where she is don't let them get her out of your reach. Have you any money?"

"Very little."

"All right. Here's more. Weekes knows how to get all he needs. And another thing——"

"Yes?"

"In making this search for Miss Hauser you'd better accept the story that the newsboy told you—that some men were returning her to a convent. That'll do for the present—it's better than anything we would invent. Your cue is that they made a mistake—got the wrong girl. See?"

"I am attempting to find and bring back the girl they took through an error—is that correct?"

"It couldn't be more correct if it was an *edicto supremal* Weekes, first—then Hulda Hauser. Ready?"

"No, Mr. June," Spilnik retorted, reaching for the door knob. "I'm gone."

And he was.

"The boy has spunk and he'll develop brains," June observed, dryly, to *Capitao* Collares, when they were alone. "He'll do, in a pinch."

"Yes, senhor."

"You're as unemotional as an umbrella, Collares," June laughed, pressing an electric-bell button. "You wouldn't ask a question about this case if you were on the red-hot grid, would you?"

Collares shrugged and smiled a little.

"I know that you Americans can not keep a secret long," he chaffed. "Therefore I wait patiently."

"Oh, you do, eh? You clever little Indian!"

A boy entered and the two ordered drinks and cigars. June turned to the police officer again.

"All right, *Capitao*, I'm going to drag pretty hard on your friendship for me tonight, and I want to start in by telling you all I know of this case. It isn't much—what I know—but what I've suspected and found out and guessed at since I've been busy at it is a whole lot more. There,

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pour a little of that into your chest. That's all, boy. I'll ring if I want you. Now."

With his tall glass of whisky and soda at his hand and a long black cigar in his fingers Billy June leaned back and began. Some of his usual irritating drawl was gone now—his words were short, his sentences crisp and his explanations and deflections were expertly pieced into the whole narrative. Nevertheless June was unhurried, as always. His main idea was to get the facts at hand into shape, marshaling all the strengths and weaknesses of his position before Collares and incidentally reconstructing his case for himself so that, when they started work again, they could start with no waste motions and no confusion of purpose.

Beginning with the interview with the head of his bureau in Washington, then, June recounted the steps he had taken to date. How he had come straight to Rio in search of the mysterious paper known as formula 021 which another Government was desperately anxious to find, and that was supposed to have been lost on the death of Mr. Jacob Hauser, how he had found that Hauser was supposed to have died suddenly in Rio in October and how a body was buried as his in the Campo Santos cemetery, in the pauper's field.

From the first he had doubted the story of the death of Dr. Hauser, therefore he had watched the grave to see what would be disclosed when the tenure on the grave had expired, and, according to the Brazilian custom, the bones were disinterred and cast into a corner. Meantime he had looked in vain for Professor Reynardo, the old Spaniard with whom, alone, it seemed, Dr. Hauser had made friends.

His adventure in the cemetery the night before had been, he said, the beginning of his enlightenment, and he told Collares how he had seen the American stranger enter after the two laborers and hide near them, how he had seen *Capitao* Flores hide to watch also, how the American had found and taken the oilskin packet, how Flores had intervened and how he himself had, by sheer luck, gained possession of the packet when he grappled with the American. His telegram concerning the activities of the American, James R. Dickson, led him to believe that the man in the cemetery had been Dickson, and the sight of that worn and mysterious map had complicated the case, at first hopelessly.

But Jan Spilnik's story, coupled with the statement of Hulda Hauser that her father had come to Brazil for some mining company had seemed to offer possibilities of light. And then had come the adventure in the house on the hill with the mysterious Brookley, alias Theiss, and his arrest, the encounter with Kriege, the finding of Dr. Hauser in a locked room in the house, and the accidental disclosure of the spiral staircase cut in stone to which, in all human probability, the note on the mysterious mine location map referred.

Now, on top of all this, came the murder of the poor old Spanish professor immediately following his interrupted interview with Hulda Hauser and Jan Spilnik, and the kidnaping of the girl.

COLLARES, his eyes on his shining shoes, that were wagged slowly back and forth, nodded gravely as point after point in the case was developed. When June finished and reached for his glass the captain spoke quickly, precisely

"The body in the grave was not Doctor Hauser's, of course. Do you know whose it was, senhor?"

"I forgot that," June admitted. "Spilnik told me that his brother's partner in the finding of that lost mine was named Dercoe and that Dercoe was deceived into giving up the map to some one calling himself Hornaday. Dercoe—I'm wondering if that isn't the long-haired, consumptive boy who was in Rio last year bothering the life out of us all for eating money until he should 'come into some money' that he was expecting—well, anyway, Dercoe wrote Spilnik that Hornaday was a lame man. And the body in the grave marked with the headstone of Doctor Hauser was the body of a man with a short left leg."

Collares nodded.

"Murdered for his secret," he ventured.

June grunted.

"No doubt of it. But the weird thing is that the men who murdered him didn't get the secret after all. It was buried with him. And that map they were so keen after that murder wouldn't stop them is in my tobacco bag and Miss Hulda Hauser has the bag. So you see that we're all going around in circles so far."

"You gave it to her?"

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"Yes. To prevent your collaborator, *Capitao* Flores, from finding it when he arrested me and searched me. That was this morning."

"You're not afraid——"

"I had to take that chance! She's a clever girl, *Capitao*. And because she doesn't know what she's carrying—because all she knows is that she has something of mine that is important and must be kept from the eyes of others—she is going to be doubly careful of it. If she knew that she had that map she might get nervous and give herself away—and mess things up pretty badly. But she doesn't."

Collares set his toes to wagging again.

"All right, senhor—then it is plain that there are two different sets of people in on this case, one interested in the formula, the other interested in the map. And in some way they've gotten their wires crossed, as you say in the States."

"Exactly. I started with that as soon as I found the map on the body buried in the grave marked with Hauser's name. It's durned puzzling, but it's a certain thing—the two gangs are working partly together."

"Which one of them kidnaped Hulda Hauser, do you think?"

"Kriege's, of course."

"Which one does this man Theiss belong with?"

"I don't know that. But from the lieutenant's chatter this afternoon about some mining deal I wouldn't be surprised if Theiss was one of the connecting links between the two."

"Is the American you spoke of—the one in the cemetery—is he after formula 021 or the map?"

"The map. Absolutely. But I must confess that I don't know how Dr. Hauser got in on the lost mine proposition or how the American, Dickson, came into the play at all."

"Wait a minute and let's reconstruct the case." Collares frowned and thought a while. "In the first place, Doctor Hauser came here at the request of this man Theiss, called Brookley in the States. Lieutenant Kriege and his gang of spies and trouble-makers—I know some of them who are hiding out at the Andres *fazenda* three hundred kilometers west of Rio now—they got Hauser into their clutches. Your theory is that they were unable to get his secret out of him."

"That's a safe bet. And Kriege didn't deny it."

"Then why pretend his death and burial?"

"I'm only guessing," June answered, promptly. "My guess is that they wanted to hide him away until they could deport him without any stir. With out-going vessels and trains watched as closely as they are now, and with the western and northern boundaries guarded it was no easy matter to carry away a living foreigner registered at his consulate. But dead——"

"I see. Officially he must be dead—and the dead must be buried."

"You've hit it. Somebody had to supply a body. Who do you think had one?"

"Some one in the lost mine hunt."

"Of course. Hornaday, the fellow who managed to get the precious map away from Dercoe, had probably fallen out with his gang—I'm assuming that he wouldn't give up. So they killed him—either in cold blood or in a fight. And that brings a certain big Brazilian official into the story."

Collares uttered a sharp exclamation.

"The man behind *Capitao* Flores!"

"That's the bird. Why else should he have Flores watching the cemetery—watching for me, as Flores admitted? And as it happens Avelina was in a position to prevent Kriege's gang from deporting Doctor Hauser secretly. They had to treat with him, and he or his crowd offered to provide the necessary dead body. So Hauser is abducted and hidden out, Hornaday is murdered and buried, and officially the death and burial of Doctor Hauser, a pauper American, is recorded. Neat, clever, no questions asked, and everybody safe. You can see that?"

Capitao Collares studied.

"And yet, plausible as that is, it doesn't account for the fact that the very map these precious rascals were risking their necks to get was found on the body—and gotten away from them! That's what upsets the theory."

"It doesn't upset anything," Billy June retorted. "Somebody blundered somewhere, that's all. The appearance of this American who I think is named Dickson seems to indicate that a good many people were in the secret of Spilnik's brother, the explorer, and his friend Dercoe. Dickson was down here on his own hook to see what

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he could find and he was the only lucky one of the outfit. He may have known that the map was on the body, but I don't think he did.

"My theory is that—American business fashion—he was overlooking no bets. And he happened to be right. We'll hear from him again—in fact, he and Theiss are strong cards that we can count on playing later. But in the meantime I think I can tell you the name of one man who knew something about the coincidence of the disappearance of Doctor Hauser and the murder and burial of poor, lame Hornaday."

"What man?"

Billy June relighted his cigar.

"Professor Reynardo. He knew too much, and that is why some one—probably our friend who is behind *Capitao* Flores——"

A sharp knock fell on Billy June's door.

"*Entre!*" Billy cried, turning.

It was the taxicab driver he had set to watch the house on the hill.

"Your party left in a big gray foreign car about five minutes ago, senhor!" he reported, getting his breath between phrases. "They went by the *Avenida* and westward by *la Rua de Petropolis*, and they drove like mad."

June threw away his cigar and reached for his comforting brown papers and American tobacco sack.

"Who are in the car?" he drawled.

"The driver, two young men, and the very sick old man, whose head is covered with blankets to keep out the night chill."

"Very good, *meu fidêll* I want to go with *Capitao* Collares, of the police, in pursuit of that gray car. But I suppose I'll have to get a good driver, won't I? Your taxicab——"

"I do not take my taxi-cab, senhor. And there is in Rio no better driver than I am. No, senhor. In five minutes I will be at the door with my stripped car, that is faster than anything in Brazil unless it be the gray foreign car! Three can ride in her, by hanging tightly. Do I go?"

June's eyes twinkled.

"Your car may be all right, but—I've always heard that you were a timid driver—that you could beat the big gray car if you weren't afraid to step on the throttle."

The taxicab driver drew himself up.

"Senhor June, is it that you desire to overtake the gray car?"

"It is all of that, *meu amable* friend."

"Then in five minutes you shall have a ride such as never man took before."

He was gone, without another word, but with an eye blazing with indignation at June's doubts of him.

And Collares and Billy June, crowded into the deep, narrow seat of the speedster and clinging tenaciously to improvised life-grips, found that all the driver had boasted was true. They were men hardened to danger of all kinds, and credited with nerves of steel, but before that night ride was over both of them would have given a good deal to have been able to recall June's taunt to the Brazilian. He was meeting a test—and nothing but Providence kept him on the road.

In the end disaster overtook him. It came unexpectedly, suddenly, and many miles from the Andres *fazenda* toward which, as had been apparent for hours, the big gray car was leading them. It came at a sharp corner, around which the little machine skidded at forty miles an hour—and plunged into the wreck of the larger one from under which, even as they struck, Billy June saw protruding the white face of Hulda Hauser.

IX

WHEN Billy June opened his eyes it was on the ceiling and walls of a clean, airy bed-chamber, lighted by a number of broad windows placed unusually high and closely barred with strips of steel. The trouble-shooter's head ached furiously and for a time he could recall nothing of the wild night ride with *Capitao* Collares nor of its calamitous end. Slowly, though, memory straightened itself out.

"Oh, ——!" quoth Billy, disgustedly.

Instantly a cool, light hand fell on his forehead and a girl, who had been sitting beside his bed, rose and leaned over him.

"Awake?" she asked, soothingly.

"Miss Hauser?"

"Yes."

"But—I thought—when our machine struck——"

"You mustn't talk. You've had a bad concussion and you lost a good deal of blood from a cut in your leg. Yes, I was pinned under the other machine, but wasn't hurt. Father was thrown out—father and the lieutenant, when we turned over.

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They came on here for help, and the rancher sent some of his men and two or three cars. They found your machine and you—and took me out and brought all of us here. Now close your eyes and try to sleep again, because I'm not going to talk to you any longer."

Billy June caught her hand in his and held it tightly.

"Listen to me, Miss Hauser," he said, slowly and with compelling earnestness. "A number of lives and two important cases depend on us—you and me—right now. Except for a headache I'm all right. I'm a hard-boiled bird and a little crack on the head isn't going to do me up permanently. But I'm human—I can't lie here and snore until I have some questions answered. Will you answer them?"

"No. I mustn't, Mr. June. I've had some training as a nurse and I ——"

"Then will you get out of here while I get up and dress?"

"No. And anyway you can't dress. Your clothes have been taken away."

"Then I'll go without clothes. One!" Billy raised himself on his elbows. "Two!" He put out a lean foot and ankle. "Thr——"

Hulda Hauser sat down on the edge of the bed.

"You will kill yourself, Mr. June," she gasped. "But go on—what are the questions?"

"That's better." The trouble-shooter settled back with a wry grin. "First, where are we?"

"In the ranch-house of a man named Andres."

"I thought so. Old cutthroat Adolfo. All right. How did you come to be in the gray car with your father?"

"The men who kidnaped me yesterday took me to a house standing alone on a high hill last evening and I was put into a room and locked in. After supper had been brought me by a very deaf old woman I heard the sounds of an argument, shouts and revolver shots in the house and an hour or so later I was given a man's suit and told to dress myself quickly and prepare for a hurried journey. At first I refused. Then they sent my father in to me. My father! Mr. June, the first sight of him nearly killed me!

"But there was no time for us to talk. He said that it would be better for me to obey orders—that the men who held us prisoners would not harm us, even though they were desperate and dangerous, so long as we made them no outright trouble. Therefore I put on the clothes. Almost before I was ready they hurried us into a machine, under the charge of a man they called lieutenant. He sat between us—gave us no chance to talk—and the car was driven at a terrible speed.

"When it turned over I thought it was my end—but no one was hurt except the driver. I think the life was crushed out of him. That is all."

"Do you know where your father is now?"

"I think he is being confined in a room here, although I have not seen him. They told me I might watch you, as there was no woman here who understood such things."

June pulled the girl's sleeve and indicated that he wanted to whisper. She bent her head down.

"Where is my tobacco sack?" he asked.

Instantly she flamed red and her eyes filled with tears.

"I—I've—it was taken from me. When they were lifting me out from under the car the lieutenant snatched it from my arm. I tried to get it back—he said he would carry it for me. I had guarded it so carefully——"

"Of course you had. And what are you worrying about now? It didn't cost more than four-bits in the States—I can get another one."

"But I thought—" The girl paused, gazing at June keenly. "I was afraid that it contained some secret——"

June squeezed out a laugh.

"Nothing more secret than a well-known mixture of tobacco leaves, alfalfa stalks and feathers that is sold for cigaret makin's, Miss Hauser. There was another little thing in it, but it doesn't matter now. You did wonderfully well to keep it so long."

"I'm afraid you are only trying to make me comfortable about it, Mr. June."

"Let's not get all heated up in an argument over it," Billy said, lightly. "Now another question. *Capitao* Collares was with me in the little striped car. Do you know what happened to him?"

"No, except that he left, hobbling painfully but hurrying, before the men from the ranch arrived for us."

"Which way did he go?"

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"Back toward Rio de Janeiro, I think."

"Good. Collares is a wise bird—he has something up his sleeve. What time is it now?"

"About one o'clock. Are you hungry?"

June thought a moment.

"Yes," he said. "Do you think you could get me something?"

"I think I can. Wait a minute."

She crossed the room and tried the door, but it was locked from without. She rapped on it, at first lightly, then sharply. Presently shuffling feet were heard and the door lock snapped. A burly Brazilian stuck his head in, grinning.

"Well, little bird in a cage?" he asked, in Portuguese.

Hulda looked toward June. The trouble-shooter answered for her.

"The senhorita speaks only English," he said bruskly. "She desires to get me something to eat. See to it, *hombre!*"

The Brazilian grunted.

"Let her see to it herself," he retorted impudently. "I am the watch dog, not the errand boy."

June spoke to Hulda.

"The man is put out there to watch me, I guess. But I don't imagine he'll try to stop you. Are you afraid here?"

The girl shrugged lightly.

"I am afraid, yes," she said frankly. "But I know there is nothing to be done except make the best of things. I am not too much afraid to get your dinner."

"All right. I don't think any one will lay a finger on you here—the game these men are playing will be easier won for them if they take good care of you and your father. And you can bank on me until the last ditch. I like your pluck and I'm going to see you through. Skip along now, please, if you will, and try to find the kitchen."

Hulda went out. Immediately the door was locked behind her. Billy June looked ruefully around the bare, high-ceilinged room and made a wry face. Certainly he was caught like a mink in a trap. He sat up in bed, experimentally, and found himself pretty weak and groggy, but better off than he had expected.

His upper leg burned irritatingly and, remembering what Hulda had said about a cut he threw back the bed clothes, loosened the bandages, and found that he carried a four-inch wound that was deep and painful, but not serious and not likely to bleed very freely again. He replaced the bandages, tying them a little tighter than they had been. Then he began looking about for a weapon in case of emergencies.

The room was almost destitute of furniture—the light table and spindle-legged chair offering nothing encouraging to a desperate man, and the other things in the room being valueless. With his head pounding from the exertion Billy crawled out of the bed and began examining that. It was an iron-framed affair, and rather rickety. June knelt and looked underneath. The springs were fitted to the frame—no bed slats or crossbars were there. The trouble-shooter pulled himself up. Then he chuckled.

At some time in its history the bed had met with an accident that had cracked its head-piece badly, and to hold the two uprights together a light iron rod had been cut, threaded at both ends, run through holes in opposite sides of the frame, and secured there with nuts. This rod was worthless, but what Billy June saw now was that, by loosening it, he might be able to take out a short section of the cracked cross-piece above it.

He tried the experiment and with a good deal of difficulty managed to unscrew one of the nuts. This allowed the head-piece to spread. Moving quietly for fear of attracting the attention of his burly guard June pulled the broken bit of iron toward him, worked it a little farther, bent it slowly out, and finally wrenched it loose. The result was a crude but dangerous weapon—a two-foot length of iron pipe, an inch in diameter, with a nasty jagged sliver at one end and a half-crook at the other.

With this bludgeon hidden under his bedcovers June threw a blanket over the head of the bed, propped a pillow, clambered in and lay with his eyes closed, breathing quickly but much more at ease because of his possession of his new war-club.

AFTER a moment or two he dozed, woke with a start, dozed again, and finally fell asleep. He slept probably fifteen or twenty minutes, dreamlessly—then wakened again, suddenly and wholly, and listened hard. The sound that had thus broken his rest was a revolver shot, and that was followed by the roar

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of at least two automobiles up the long driveway to the house. Now voices rose—angry and impatient voices, and the barking of two or three half-wild dogs.

Some bellowing roar caused the dogs to subside, and the man who had cowed them turned with the same bull-like bellow and demanded to know what was wanted. The answer came in the voice of *Capitao* Manuelo Collares!

"We have warrants, Senhor Adolfo Andres, for the search of your premises. And the man who intereferes with us will regret it. Go ahead, *soldados!*"

Billy, his nerves steady but his heart beating in quick time, knew from the sounds that many men were moving about—and from below he heard the running footsteps of others. Senhor Andres and his *cangasheiros* were prepared to defend the *fazenda* even against the soldiery of the district and against the authority of the police.

That there would be a fight was a certain conclusion. Then he heard the voice of Andres from the end of the hall beyond his own door, the shuffling feet of his big guard, and a key at his lock. His guard had been ordered to make away with him!

In a breath he was out of bed and, with his bar in hand, had flattened himself against the wall just inside the casing. The Brazilian outside swore impatiently—a shout and two or three shots from below were followed by the scream of a badly injured man—and the door opened. The gunman plunged in, saw the empty bed, and wheeled, gun in hand. But he fell like an ox in the stall! June's crude weapon had met the emergency!

It was no easy task to tear the man's clothes from him, but June worked as rapidly as he could, his ears filled with sounds of the struggle going on below. Evidently the ranch people had withdrawn inside and barricaded doors and windows—June could hear heavy objects dragged across the floor and the shouts of Adolfo Andres, the villainous old rancher, and of another heavy-voiced man who spoke Portuguese with a strong foreign accent. Billy's concern for the moment was with Hulda Hauser and her old father.

With nimble fingers driven to their task by a will-power that overcame weakness and the pounding in his head the trouble-shooter ripped off the coat, trousers and boots of the guard he had struck down and pulled them on to his own body. In less than a minute he was clothed, armed, and provided with a loaded ammunition belt. In another minute he had gone out, re-locked the door to provide against the possible return to consciousness of his victim, and had run down the corridor in which he found himself, to the head of the winding stairs at the far end.

It was impossible to see below, but the ominous silence there, broken only by grunts and muttered oaths and by the occasional movement of men's feet told him that the house was under siege. He turned again to examine the corridor and its doors and grinned with relief.

Hulda Hauser stood not ten feet from him, her hand at her throat and her face pale. For a moment after he turned she did not recognize him, then she gasped.

"Mr. June!" she whispered.

Billy stepped up to her.

"Yep. My guard fell asleep on the job. We've got friends below. Do you know where your father is?"

She nodded dumbly, and pointed to a closed door.

"I've been whispering to him. He is terrified."

"Whisper again," Billy counseled. "Tell him to keep quiet. Everything will come out all right. Don't worry."

"Where are you going? Not to leave us?"

"Not on your life. I'm going to see if my key will fit your father's door."

Hulda nodded brightly and crossed the corridor, while June ran back to the door through which he had just escaped, and took out the key. In another moment he was back beside the girl who was kneeling to whisper encouragement to the prisoner within. And the old chemist was a prisoner only an instant longer. For the key, a crude and heavy affair, turned the tumblers of the second lock as well as it had of the first. June opened the door—and Hulda Hauser fell sobbing into the arms of her father.

June did not follow her. Instead he threw the key inside.

"Better lock yourselves in for now," he advised sharply. "They may come up from below any minute. That's right."

Old Dr. Hauser had taken up the key, closed the door and locked it. June moved

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quietly to the head of the staircase and now, when he leaned over, he could see the heads of two men—one that of the notorious old ruffian, Adolfo Andres, owner of the place, the other that of a foreigner whose face was red and wet with perspiration and whose pig-eyes gleamed angrily from behind heavy-lensed glasses. They were talking in an undertone.

"If you'd done as I advised at first," Andres was saying, "you could have been on your way home two months ago with your infernal secret! But you didn't have the stomach!"

"Ach, stomach! I tell you, Senhor Andres, the old fool would have died before he would have told. And we could not find the paper! With the girl I should have gotten his formula from him in another day and now——".

"Well, and now! Suppose you get it now—a fine lot of good it will do you! These dogs of the police are all around the place——"

"I will get the formula, if you will help me. And in the police are friends highly paid to see that nothing happens to me."

"To you—no. But how about me? You've been pretty liberal with your money up to now, I'll admit, but do you think you can pay me for this conflict with the authorities? I wish I had never heard of you and that *condemnado* formula naught-twenty-one!"

"You shall be paid, senhor. Only help me! I can kill, but I can not terrorize this obstinate old chemist fool! Will you handle this girl of his for me? Come, now! for any price you will name!"

"I'll make it short, I tell you that, Doctor!"

"I do not care. You may kill them both—or you may have the girl! Only so I get that formula!"

"Come, then!"

At the head of the stairs Billy June looked carefully at the cylinder of the revolver he had taken from the guard, shifted his position slightly, and took a deep breath. In another moment he would have to move quickly—surely—and against two desperate men, in their own quarters. What he would do would depend on what the instant brought to be done—what difficulties would be presented immediately afterward must be met in turn.

But there could be no delay—no time for planning. If ever these two hardened old villains were allowed to enter the room in which Hulda Hauser and her father were locked . . .

The two men came heavily and hurriedly up the stairs. June, in the shadow of a door casing, was waiting for them to reach the corridor itself—for them to pass him, if they would. The foreigner came first, peering floorward to find his step. June could have touched him as he passed, breathing stertorously. Behind, Adolfo Andres, his dark face set in menacing lines of anger and passion, urged him on impatiently. June, holding his breath, raised his black-barreled revolver.

Then suddenly heavy blows fell on the door below—two windows crashed in and a perfect fusillade of shots beat up. Shouts, oaths, screams, the sound of a door wrenched down—the shrill voice of *Capitao* Collares and some other officer—and the pounding of men's feet! Adolfo Andres, bellowing, turned to go back, looked below at some scene that made him livid with rage and fear, swung about irresolutely, and plunged upward once more, stumbling into the frightened foreigner ahead and sending him rolling to the floor.

Billy June laughed—laughed aloud.

"Greetings, Senhor Andres," he said pleasantly, in his characteristic drawl. "We meet again! No, don't bother to get up, Herr Fatty! You'll be much more comfortable where you are! There, that's sensible. Now we'll just wait a minute for Collares to clean up your *cangasheiro* gang below—then we'll all run into Rio and give your gang a pleasant, nourishing meal at the expense of the Republic of Brazil. Don't swear, Andres! There's a lady in the room just beyond!

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COMPLETELY demoralized by the attacking police, under *Capitao* Collares and two other officers he had enlisted in Baturité, a town near the *fazenda*—the gunmen of the Andres establishment were soon beaten down and compelled to surrender. They had been confused by the disappearance of Andres himself, they were outnumbered, and they knew that the cause in which they were engaged was not their master's but that

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of his foreign guests, who stood none too highly with the men.

In fifteen minutes sudden quiet below, broken only by the calm voice of *Capitao* Collares ordering the disposition of his prisoners, assured Billy June, listening above, that the fight was over. Calling the news to Hulda Hauser and her father he waved his revolver at the surly rancher, Andres, and his pale-green guest, the *Herr Doktor*, and down the stairs those two worthies proceeded, very angry and rebellious in the one case, and very trembling and distressed in the other.

Explanations were cut short. *Capitao* Collares, after the smash the night before in the road, had started back for help with their driver, who had sustained only a sprained wrist, but had gone but a little ways when they heard machines coming from the direction of the Andres *fazenda*. They had hidden in the shrubbery by the roadside while the work of rescue was carried on, had recognized some of the Andres workmen and also Lieutenant Kriege, and knew certainly then where the injured would be taken.

Collares had hastened away therefrom, hired a horse, and ridden hard for police assistance. Assured that the Andres forces would put up a fight to prevent the rescue of Billy June, Dr. Hauser, or any one else in the party, he had sent for reinforcements to Sao Lorenzo, and then had returned as rapidly as possible.

Adolfo Andres refused, at first, to answer any questions. But when Billy June, glad to rid himself and his case of all possible complications, offered him the chance to give State's evidence, Andres cursed his foreign guests and told June that, as far as he was concerned, the police could take *Herr Doktor* Fast and his friend Druberg to Jericho if they wished.

"They were recommended to me," he said, gazing at them sourly. "I did not know their business. They said there was a man they desired to get out of Brazil. This week they decided he must go by way of Peru, across the mountains. They have made me trouble enough. I'm willing to cry quits!"

June did not believe Senhor Adolfo Andres—those who had had dealings with him never did believe the amiable old cutthroat—but there was too much work on hand to be particular. In short, it was decided that *Herr Doktor* Fast, the lean-faced, quiet Druberg, and the two silent youths they had brought with them as body-servants, should be taken back to Rio by the police, under *Capitao* Collares, and that the incident should be thus closed.

Andres showed his relief in his face, and ordered a meal prepared at once so that all his guests, invited and uninvited, might be fed. To do him justice the meal, hastily spread, was a generous and palatable one and June, for one, ate heartily.

Meantime, however, there were other matters of moment to be considered. Lieutenant Kriege was, of course, absent and unaccounted for. Even the sour and melancholy Herr Fast did not know when the younger man had left the *fazenda*, he asserted. Billy June did not press his questions, for Hulda Hauser, remembering the beaded tobacco pouch she had lost to the lieutenant, was watching the trouble-shooter's face anxiously.

For his part June knew perfectly well that Kriege had discovered the oil-skin packet in the pouch. How much or how little it meant to him June could not tell. But he could not forget that, penciled on the bottom of the enclosed map, he had read those ominous words: "If anything happens to me my murderers can be traced by way of the spiral staircase in the rock that you will learn of." And it seemed unreasonable to believe that the shrewd and conscienceless Kriege would be left out of any conspiracy so closely connected with the plot to get formula 021 and also so tempting in its promises of untold wealth.

The hot food and strong drink on the table of the rancher Billy June needed badly—but once that was consumed he was determined to be on his way toward the city and the further pursuit of this complexity of two sensational mysteries.

Old Dr. Hauser, the chemist, had obstinately refused to leave his room and share a meal with the men who had caused him so much trouble, pain and anxiety, and June and the police sympathized with him. Consequently he and his daughter were served above. When June had eaten he went up and was admitted. Dr. Hauser was worn, thin, pale and sick, and so feeble that he could scarcely hold himself together at all. He attempted to thank Billy June for all that had been done, as his daughter

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had told him, but broke into tears. June nodded appreciatively.

"That's all right, now, Mr. Hauser," he said. "We'll have all that out when the time comes. I only wanted to ask you a question or two. Can you answer them—so that you will help me on my way with this business?"

"Yes, sir."

"About this mysterious formula that so much fuss has been kicked up over: have you your naught-twenty-one down on paper anywhere?"

"Yes. But it is safely hidden away—with a friend."

"You mean Professor Reynardo?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"No." June's face was a mask, but he reached for the cigaret papers and tobacco he had borrowed from one of the police officers below. "You felt you could trust Reynardo, did you, Doctor?"

"I could trust him until death!" the old chemist answered, solemnly.

June lighted his cigaret with steady hands.

"I see," he said, casually. "Then that's all right. Now, can you tell me anything about your sickness, back in October, when you were supposed to have died and been buried?"

"My daughter told me of that. I know nothing more."

"You can't give me any clue, then?"

The old man's forehead wrinkled. Then he smiled.

"Oh, the scoundrels! I know now. That was when I was given some sleeping potion—I slept three days and was very sick when I recovered. That was when I found myself locked up in the room in the house on the hill."

"Were you there when I ran past and shouted to you day before yesterday?"

"Was it you? Yes, there. The lieutenant and his superiors—these two men below, called Fast and Druberg—they were trying all that time to make me give them the formula. They threatened every terrible thing known to hellish minds. But I told them I would die before I would name for them one single constituent of the explosive.

"I had refused twenty years ago when I was visiting in Freiburg, when they first learned I had invented this formula. I had refused several times at my home in Erie, Pennsylvania. And when they trapped me here I refused again." His face colored and he struck his chair arm forcibly. "And I have beaten them in the end—they have not the formula and they will never have it unless some one else discovers it for them through original research."

Billy June rose, for he saw that the old chemist was becoming much too excited for his own good.

"Take it easy, now, Doctor," he said, quietly. "We'll have a long talk when we get settled back in Rio, or in the States again. But now you have to go slow. There's just one thing I'd like to ask you about before I go. Can you tell me anything about a little sketch map showing the route that leads to a hidden lode of rich gold ore? A map wrapped——"

INSTANTLY the old chemist stiffened, and his hands gripped the chair arms.

"Mr. June," he said, pointedly, "my daughter tells me that you have been most kind and helpful—that if it had not been for you we might never have seen each other again. But when you ask me concerning a secret belonging to another man I must refuse to answer."

Hulda Hauser, who had been sitting by very quietly, watching the two men, broke out with a cry.

"Father! Mr. June is——"

"Be silent, daughter! I can tell nothing."

"But we know we can trust Mr. June! We owe him everything!"

Billy June interrupted.

"You have me wrong, Mr. Hauser," he said, patiently. "I know all about that map—I know who drew it and who it belongs to now and if my luck holds I'll soon have the map itself. You can't tell me anything about the secret—I only want to know something about the man who last carried it. Some way or other that man has gotten mixed up in this case of yours so that it's hard to tell where yours begins and his leaves off. There has been murder done over that map——"

"Mr. June, I can tell nothing."

"All right—we'll let it go at that. And I'll have to be getting along. Don't think about it again. *Capitao* Collares will see that you are taken back to Rio and made comfortable and I'll meet you there. Good-by."

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Hulda Hauser, tears in her eyes and her hands trembling, followed the trouble-shooter into the corridor.

"Don't judge him too harshly, Mr. June," she pleaded, touching his arm. I'm sure that, when he is rested, he will help you in any way he can."

"Why, of course he will, little lady," June said, reassuringly. "I'm sorry I tackled the subject. Don't let it worry you for a minute."

"You're sure that when I lost your tobacco pouch I did not——"

"Shucks!" Billy June interrupted, inelegantly; "haven't you forgotten that little accident yet? Cheer up! I'm going in to Rio to tell Jan Spilnik that you're the pluckiest little girl in Brazil and to give him a piece of advice. Now run on back and kid father along!"

Hulda Hauser blushed furiously.

"I'd forgotten all about Mr. Spilnik!" she exclaimed.

"Oh, had you?" June asked, innocently, and winked at her, and was gone.

He was driven to make haste back, now, by a new reason—the disclosure that, somewhere in the effects of poor Professor Reynardo the very paper for which all these foreigners had risked so much—the fateful 021—might be lying for any blundering fool to stumble on! Reynardo, Dr. Hauser had said, could be trusted to the death—but how about after death? And June's problem was suddenly changed.

Instead of worrying, for the present at least, about Lieutenant Kriege and the tobacco pouch, with its oilskin packet and the map of the gold-lode country, he must put himself into immediate possession of everything Professor Reynardo owned, if he could. Failing in that he must prevent Kriege and whatever aides and assistants and co-conspirators were left to him from succeeding in the same attempt.

If Kriege should guess that Reynardo held 021 in his lifetime, in trust for Dr. Hauser, every minute of freedom he was given lengthened the time he would have to ransack the dead man's effects.

June had a good deal to delay him on his way toward Rio. The first stage of the journey he made in a car commandeered at the Andres *fazenda*. The machine, by a coincidence Billy June contemplated wryly, broke down at Petropolis, less than half-way to Rio de Janeiro—it was necessary there to accept as a substitute a little American car of the vintage of '11 and of more creakings and groanings and rattlings and gurglings than were good for the trouble-shooter's peace of mind.

But, in spite of its ailments, or perhaps because of them, the little car proved a surprising ground-coverer: in the long run the exchange was beneficial, and the new driver a miracle of resourcefulness and dexterity, once he had received a hint of the length of June's purse. In brief, Rio was reached before eleven o'clock that night and Billy June, plunging into a bath in his hotel, was presently confronting a thick steak, a pint of ale, and the information that Mr. Spilnik and Mr. Weekes desired to see him.

The faces of the two men whom he had enlisted in the search of Hulda Hauser were so melancholy when they first appeared that June burst out laughing.

"I don't see the joke," Weekes, the newspaperman growled. "We've run two pairs of elegant legs down to the shinbones for you, while you disappeared from the face of the earth, and when we come back to report no luck you sit over beefsteak and Bass's and giggle! How about the girl?"

Jan Spilnik was pale and haggard, and so weary he flopped, rather than dropped, into a chair.

"Mr. June, Miss Hauser can not be found. We have run down every clue we could get. Mr. Weekes has worked like a detective—he thought of everything at once—he saw all the trails, all the possibilities, while I saw nothing. But we return without definite information. A Brazilian and a foreigner kidnaped her—we found that much. At least Mr. Weekes did."

"A foreigner with a bad scar across his face?" Billy asked, casually.

"How did you know that?"

"Didn't you discover that they took her to the big white house on the hill? The one—" And Billy described Kriege's residence.

"We did not." Weekes was crusty. "If you know so much about it why didn't you call us off, June?"

"Couldn't," Billy answered, his mouth full. "Busy. Sit down. Tell you about it."

And briefly, he did.

"And so Collares will herd them all in to Rio about noon tomorrow, if nothing happens," he concluded. "Now I'm on

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my way again. I'm going to Reynardo's place. And if I'm not back by daybreak go to the police and report that I have been murdered and that the body— Oh, cheer up, Spilnik, I'm only kidding you. Lie down and grab a little sleep, both of you, and I'll see you in the morning. If I'm not here, get an officer and come after me, because it is just possible that I'll need reinforcements."

The trouble-shooter threw off the clothes he had taken from the Andres *cangasheiro*, buckled on an extra gun that he took from his trunk, and bade them good-night. He was still suffering from a bad headache and there was a bruise on the back of his head half as big as his fist—but for him there was no sleeping until he had reached the little home of Professor Reynardo. A taxi-cab carried him most of the way, but the last two squares he walked, and walked very quietly. A drowsy policeman passed him, stared, recognized him, touched his helmet, and went on.

A cab full of roisterers from Morangaha careened through the street. A rooster, startled by their laughter, crowed vigorously and others took up the news. Billy June yawned and touched his aching head with a grunt of misery. Then he turned into the little garden surrounding the cottage that was his destination.

IT WAS a small garden, once beautifully kept but now showing signs of neglect. June had been to the place half a dozen times, when he had first returned from the States on this mission of his, and unconsciously he had taken note of the lay of the ground and the house. He had never been inside the latter, but it was so small that the locations of doors and windows pretty definitely told the story of the interior arrangement.

The wide front door opened directly into a little living-room or parlor; behind that was a sleeping-room; opposite these a dining-room in front and behind it a kitchen and a small room for a servant. Billy June surmised that the place was tenantless, but he might be mistaken. He would knock, first at the front door, then at the . . .

Moving softly he had come to the little, low porch when he was stopped, as though turned into stone, by the sound of a guarded movement inside. At the same instant a flicker of light showed through the drawn blinds of the room at June's right—the room he had surmised was the dining-room. It was now almost one o'clock—the house was that of a man who, twenty-four hours before, had been foully murdered. Whoever was within was no rightful tenant. June thought instantly of Kriege.

Stooping he unloosed and took off his shoes, then rose and crept cautiously to the window. The drawn blind was an old one, that bellied away from the casing a bare half-inch at one side. It was impossible to see directly into the room—all June could make out was the shadow of a man on one wall. Breathlessly he listened. The night visitor was ransacking the place systematically, slowly, painstakingly.

June could hear drawers cautiously pulled out and their contents dumped to a table or the floor. Interminably papers were opened, studied, refolded and tossed aside. As June's ears became attuned to the muffled movements within he could hear the man breathe hard occasionally, and shift his position. But nothing was retarding that fine-tooth combing!

Billy June always preferred the attack direct. Waiting, pussy-footing, taking the circuitous and cautious route were not a part of his usual program. But for once he was compelled to accept discretion as the major portion of valor. To plunge into that room, by door or window, would be to give the man within every advantage, either for fight or flight. And June did not know, surely, who the man was, whether or not he was alone, or what he would do if surprised.

To lose the man or any of the papers the man had found might be fatal. On the other hand, to give him warning enough so that he could conceal or destroy anything would be equally disastrous. Gingerly, then, and with a snail's slowness, the trouble-shooter moved stealthily back into the path and around the corner of the house.

Here, again, he was disappointed. The window-blind on that side was pulled close and no ray of light escaped from it. The rear door was bolted from within. Beyond it again were two low windows, barely large enough for a man to crawl through, but both locked. Turning the far corner of the house June came on another window—locked—then a door—bolted—then the front corner of the house—a locked window and a door securely fastened!

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Having made the circuit of the house, by painful and infinitely tedious progression, June found himself back at his starting-point, baffled. The man inside still carried on his intent and minute search. Still he breathed hard—once he groaned, as though racked by weariness.

There was something so dogged and persistent in the unknown searcher's movements that Billy June admired him in one moment and feared him in the next. For the trouble-shooter there remained the choice—a still-hunt of the house until the man inside should come out where he might be trapped, or a desperate and reckless charge on the place, leaving the issue to luck and his own quick wits. June inclined toward the latter program, studied it, decided upon it, and was about to move up to the windows to break one of them in and board the house when he heard steps.

There was a large *goyaba* bush between him and the front walk, and in its dense shade the trouble-shooter stood. It was all that saved him and saved the situation, for it screened him perfectly. And the men from whom it screened him—two of them—desperate, dangerous, resourceful, powerful, and fearful of him, would have killed him as carelessly as they would have brushed a spider from their path. They were *Capitão* Flores, his avowed enemy, and the great Brazilian official often referred to in this tale as the man higher up! Because they did not suspect his presence, there behind that *goyaba*, they went quietly and quickly up to the front door, softly inserted a key into the lock, swung the door, and stepped inside.

Their progress was halted then with an abruptness that threw them together, grinding their teeth in anger. It was halted by a cold, curt command from within—a command issued in unmistakable American English and by a voice Billy June had heard once before.

"Stick up your hands, gents!" the voice snapped coldly, and without a tremor in it. "Police coats and braid on your sleeves don't buy any chips in this game—I'd shoot you for batting an eye just as quick as I would for putting up a fight! Now come on in, quiet-like, and back up against that——"

Billy June stood in the door behind the two Brazilians, protected by their bodies, and with his own long gun drawn down so that its black snout was the object most distinctly seen by the American in the littered dining-room-study of the murdered Reynardo.

"Go ahead and shoot 'em, if you want to," the trouble-shooter drawled, eying the stranger along the barrel of his revolver. "But if you pull a trigger you go down with 'em. Don't overlook that. There, that's the wrinkle. Now all three of you just line up along the wall, and don't hustle me any, or get me excited. Oh, so we're all here, are we?"

The last question would have been an exclamation from any one save the slow-spoken and unemotional Billy June. For, tied securely to a chair in one corner of the little room, his hands bound behind him and a gag in his mouth, sat the person who, as Billy June instantly knew, had breathed so hard and groaned so piteously during the search—the hard-pressed and desperate Lieutenant Kriege!

June crossed to the American, whose revolver hung in his hand limply.

"I'll take that iron of yours, Mr. James R. Dickson, alias Robert K. Smithey," he said pleasantly. "And I'll trouble you also to step around and unload this pair of official murderers and thieves you have trapped for me! Thank you! I don't know yet that I've got anything against you, Mr. Dickson. Maybe we're both working together after all—or can, if we can make arrangements. But in the meantime I'm not taking any chances. Hello!"

For once Billy June showed surprise and a flutter of excitement. His eye had fallen on the table in the center of the room. The floor around it was littered with a foot-deep accumulation of papers, and documents, manuscripts and books—the table itself was clear save for two objects.

Dickson, the American, shrugged his shoulders and swore.

"Kriege had the thing I came to look for," he explained briefly, and a little bitterly. "But I stayed to find what he said he came for. Yes, they're both there!"

They were, as Billy June could see.

Two oilskin packets, as alike as two peas—from one protruding the map June had taken from Dickson himself in the cemetery, from the other a piece of thin paper on the margin of which, clearly enough, could be read the single number 021!

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XI

AT FOUR o'clock on the following afternoon a strangely assorted gathering met in a long, bare hall in the office of the Brazilian *Departmento del Juiz Primeiro*—the cast of characters in the last act of the tragic case that we know as the search for 021. Hulda Hauser and her father sat at the table with the official in charge of the informal hearing of the case, and near them were Billy June, the South American trouble-shooter, Jan Spilnik, heir to his brother's one-half interest in the mysterious map showing the location of a certain gold lode in the interior of Brazil, and little Sammy Weekes, the newspaperman, keen on the trail of the greatest news sensation that had broken in Rio for years.

Against one wall, guarded by the police, were *Herr Doktor* Fast, his lean-faced friend and associate, Franz Druberg, Lieutenant Kriege, and four foreigners, among them the scar-faced youth, who had been caught that morning in the white house on the hill. Under the great windows looking down on the busy streets of Rio sat the American, James R. Dickson, who had came to Brazil as Robert Smithey, and with them a hollow-cheeked, sickly man of thirty-eight who had been located and brought in from a neighboring sanatorium but a few hours before.

His name was Daniel Dercoe—he was the man who with Peter Spilnik, Jan's brother, had discovered the gold lode in the mountains of Brazil less than two years before and it had been from him that the dead man Hornaday had gotten the map.

As the bell on the *Iglesia de Sao Pedro* chimed four there entered a police officer to whom was securely chained *Capitao* Flores, late of the police himself but now accused before the law of the murder of Professor Reynardo, and after them came *Capitao* Collares with a second prisoner at sight of whom the foreigners along the wall gasped and the American, Dickson, grinned and winked consolingly—David Brookley, alias Paul Theiss, the man Billy June had made prisoner in the house of Lieutenant Kriege on the afternoon that the trouble-shooter found the spiral staircase cut in stone—and finding it saved his life.

The hearing that followed consumed over four hours—and during its progress not a sound interfered with the even flow of question and answer unrolling the scroll of this remarkable case. It was not a formal trial. Billy June had succeeded in getting official consent to an examination, before an inquisitor, in order to set forth the facts in the case for the guidance of the State's prosecutors.

He himself had arranged the program of the testimony and it was the result of his work that brought together, in this orderly fashion, the scattered and often isolated facts essential to an understanding of the conspiracy.

Doutor Pinheiro, the judge in charge, nodded to June when the two prisoners were seated, and June proceeded to tell his own story, briefly.

"Illustrissimo juiz!" he said then, to the inquisitor. "The men named as defendants in this case are Fast, Druberg, Kriege, Flores, and Theiss, whose real name is David Brookley. The indictments charge murder, a conspiracy to murder, unlawful detainer, robbery and abduction. What I desire to obtain is an abstract of the testimony offered at this hearing, in order that it may be presented to the proper authorities for their action. If your stenographer is ready we will proceed."

The stenographer was ready. He answered a word from the inquisitor, squared his elbows, wrote the names of the defendants, glancing at them one after another as June named them, as though to identify their faces, and signified that June might call his witnesses.

THE abstract the reporter made, on the following day, is as follows:

In the case of the people of the Republic against Manoel Flores and others:

Informal inquisition conducted by *Doutor* Pinheiro on the nineteenth day of April, 1918, with the defendants all present.

Jacob Hauser, American, testified:

That he came to Brazil on the representations of David Brookley that Brookley and others owned a mine that it was necessary for them to exploit secretly to avoid a rush to the vicinity of their property, and that they proposed that he handle the ore taken out in such a way that it might be shipped to Rio de Janeiro as, and with the appearance of, some other metal than gold. That he reached Rio in September of last year, when he met, for the first time, three foreigners, defendants Fast, Druberg and

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Kriege, and immediately became concerned as to the safety of a certain paper he carried with him—a formula which he called Serial No. 021.

That the reason for his concern was that he had been approached before by officials of the same nation as that of Fast and his friends, and that the latter aroused his suspicions in their actions toward him. That at this juncture he met a Spanish professor, Dr. Reynardo, who was retired and living quietly in Rio, and that through Reynardo he met a lame man called Hornaday, in whom Prof. Reynardo was very much interested.

Question (by Senhor June). You trusted Dr. Reynardo from the first, did you not, Dr. Hauser?

Answer. Implicitly.

Q. And Hornaday also confided in him?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What was Reynardo's interest in this lame man, Hornaday?

A. Hornaday had gained possession of a map showing the location of valuable mining properties in western Brazil. He had met one of the original locators of this property while they were together on an exploring expedition last year in Africa.

Q. What was that explorer's name—the one who originally located the mining property?

A. Peter Spilnik.

Q. Proceed, Doctor.

A. Hornaday had come to Brazil and gotten the map from Spilnik's partner and had organized a company to search for it and bring out the gold. But he had found the men in the company quarreling among themselves as to the spoils, and had become alarmed for fear they would defraud him of his interest. He told Dr. Reynardo this. Dr. Reynardo was greatly excited and when I met him he told me and asked my advice.

Q. You learned, Dr. Hauser, who the men were in Hornaday's company?

A. Yes, sir. The same men who had brought me to Brazil, and also a certain high Brazilian official named——

Q. I will ask you not to mention the name, please. You may refer to the man in question as the Brazilian official—that will be sufficient.

Q. (By the inquisitor). Do you insist on that omission, Senhor June?

A. (By Senhor June). If you please, senhor. You will understand presently.

Q. (By Senhor June). Now, Doctor, proceed with your statement.

A. When I learned that the men I feared were also feared by this man Hornaday I decided that they were in a conspiracy, not only to steal my formula 021, but to steal his map. Fast, Kriege, and Druberg, at least, were mainly interested in 021—the others in the mining location. But they could join issues, as I saw it, very profitably.

Q. In that predicament, Dr. Hauser, what did you do next?

A. Dr. Reynardo, Mr. Hornaday and I decided to leave Rio de Janeiro secretly, at once, because we feared the power of these men.

Q. What were you afraid of, specifically, Dr. Hauser?

A. We were afraid of being murdered.

Q. But you did not leave as you planned?

A. No, sir. They must have suspected us, for on the appointed night I was overpowered by some potent drug and when I awoke I was a prisoner.

Q. Of whom?

A. Of Herr Fast and Lieutenant Kriege. They tried to compel me to divulge the ingredients of my formula, but they failed. Day before yesterday they captured my daughter who had come here in search of information concerning my reported death and they were about to torture her to force me to give up my secret when they were alarmed and took us away to the country. Then we were rescued by *Capitao* Collares and yourself.

Q. You do not know then, Doctor, what became of Senhor Hornaday?

A. I do not.

Q. Do you carry that formula, 021, on your person?

A. I always have, up to the day before we planned to flee from Brazil.

Q. But at that time?

A. At that time I sealed it in an oilskin packet and gave it to Professor Reynardo for safekeeping.

Q. Concerning the map that Hornaday had, now, Doctor: did you not carry that yourself for him?

A. How did you learn that, senhor?

Q. You will find out presently.

A. Yes. On the morning of the day on which I was drugged I sealed up Hornaday's map in a packet exactly like the one in which I had put my formula. In that

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packet I carried it for a few hours—that afternoon until I was drugged.

Q. You do not know what became of it thereafter?

A. I do not, no, sir.

Q. That is all, Dr. Hauser. Witness Theiss.

Witness Theiss, sworn, demanded to know whether he was to be granted immunity for testifying, was assured by inquisitor that such a recommendation was to be made to the proper authorities, thereupon testified as follows:

That he was formerly associated in American mining enterprises with one James R. Dickson; that he met defendant Druberg in New York City and that Druberg urged him to come to Brazil to take up a secret lode of ninety per cent. pure gold which was to be had there by Druberg and his associates. That Druberg represented that they wanted to add an experienced mining man to their company and that, on these facts, witness had come to Brazil.

That in August of last year defendant Fast, another member of the mining company, asked witness to go to the States and secure the services of Dr. Hauser, a famous metallurgist, that witness finally consented to go and succeeded in bringing Dr. Hauser back with him. That only on his return with the metallurgist and chemist did he realize that Fast and Druberg had used him for a decoy to get Dr. Hauser into their power, although he did not know why they wanted him.

That this discovery, coupled with suspicions he had concerning other members of the company, including that high Brazilian official Dr. Hauser had been asked not to name alarmed witness and decided him in favor of abandoning the others and trying for himself to get possession of the map owned by the lame man, Hornaday. But that all his plans were upset then by the death of Hornaday.

Q. (By Senhor June). Proceed, Mr. Theiss—just a moment. What is your true name?

A. David Brookley.

Q. Why did you assume the alias?

A. Just a notion of Druberg's. He said that the people of his nationality were very powerful in Brazil and that a name like Theiss would help me here.

Q. Proceed with your story—what you know of the death of Hornaday.

A. He was murdered.

Q. By whom?

A. I am not sure—but it was under the direction of Kriege and the high Brazilian official referred to before.

Q. He was murdered for the sake of his secret map?

A. Yes. And after that his body was buried by the police officers in a grave supposed to be that of Dr. Hauser.

Q. Why Dr. Hauser?

A. To give Fast and his crew a chance to get away with Hauser himself without interference or question. The police official undertook to put the records right on the case so that there would be no investigation.

Q. Were you a party to this murder?

A. I was not. I heard of it from Fast when it was too late for me to do anything. I went to the house where Hornaday and Hauser were staying—the house of Professor Reynardo—to interfere, but I found that it was all over. I wanted to get hold of that map if I could—that was why I did not report the murder. Besides I thought it would do no good to tell the police—one of the high officials of the department was in on the thing. And I always believed that it was *Capitao* Flores who did the job, too. So there I was.

Q. Do you know how the substitution of Hornaday's body for that of the supposedly dead Dr. Hauser was managed?

A. Sure. They simply changed clothes—put the dead man's on Hauser and Hauser's on the dead man. There was no one to investigate but Professor Reynardo, and they easily fooled him in spite of the fact that he came back to the house when they were not expecting him.

Q. You are willing to swear that there was a conspiracy leading to the murder of Hornaday. Who were in that conspiracy?

A. Fast was the principal of the Kriege-Druberg gang. The murder was planned and executed by the Brazilian higher up and Flores.

Q. You think the murder failed to help these conspirators, do you?

A. I know it. There was an awful row when they found that both the formula 021 of Dr. Hauser's and the Hornaday map had disappeared. Each one of us suspected the others. But very soon I made up my mind that none of them had stolen the map because of the fact that they remained here and went on quarreling and searching. I

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guess I was the only one who figured it that way—the rest of them spent their time watching one another and making accusations.

Q. How long ago did this murder occur?

A. As nearly as I can recall it was on the thirteenth or fourteenth of last October.

Q. What did you do after the murder?

A. I spent several months searching for the map. Then I finally induced Mr. Dickson to come down and help. On my advice he came under the name of Smithey because I was afraid I might have mentioned his real name to Druberg. Dickson proposed to get a permit to disinter the body—he said that at least that would force the hands of the others. But he didn't succeed. So he watched and found the police in the cemetery the night the body was taken up—last Thursday night. He got the paper but lost it again.

The next morning he came to me and said that he was going to try another search, but asked me to get Kriege and find out whether the lieutenant was the man who took the map from him in the cemetery. I went to Kriege's house to find him. I believed with Dickson that Kriege had won the map and I was going to get it or get him, one or the other. But I was arrested while waiting in the house on the hill.

Q. That is all, Mr. Theiss. Witness Dickson.

Witness Dickson sworn and—through an interpreter—testified as follows: That when he came to Brazil at the request of his former associate, Mr. Brookley, known in Brazil as Theiss, he tried in vain to get a permit to take up the body in the grave marked with Dr. Hauser's name, that he bribed a minor official and through him learned that the police were going to take up the body themselves. That he watched, found the paper, lost it in a struggle, and then went to Theiss.

Theiss undertook to face Kriege, and Dickson began watching Flores, as the one most likely to make an active search for the map. That he saw Flores and his superior go to the home of Prof. Reynardo on Wednesday noon and shortly afterward saw a closed carriage drive up and two guards help an elderly man out—a man he learned later was Reynardo himself. That shortly afterward, while the official, Flores and Reynardo were in the house with the two guards Miss Hulda Hauser and Jan Spilnik appeared and were admitted. They stayed only a few minutes.

After they were gone witness continued to watch the house until late in the evening, when the two officials of the police and their two men left. Witness went to the house at once and there discovered the dead body of Prof. Reynardo. Afraid to raise an alarm for fear of implicating himself he returned to the place from which he had watched all afternoon, saw the authorities come and remove the body, and then, when he was about to make another effort to get into the house, saw *Capitao* Flores and his superior return and was forced to spend another night waiting.

The two left at dawn and then it was that Dickson gained entrance. He found that the house had already been searched, but, determined to try his own luck, he had spent the day prying into every possible hiding-place.

Q. You were not disturbed during the day?

A. No. It was not until evening—last evening—that I heard some one. I hid behind a door and when Lieutenant Kriege entered I knocked him down, tied him, gagged him and put him out of the way in a corner. It was after that that I found Professor Reynardo's journal.

Q. A diary?

A. Yes. Kriege wanted to talk, then, and I took out his gag. He said that he was willing to give up what I wanted—the map—if I would turn this diary over to him and leave him to continue the search of the secret drawer. I was willing enough, but Kriege became so excited that I began to suspect a trick. When he told me that my friend Dave Brookley—he called him Theiss—had disappeared I decided that the gang had murdered him. So I put Mr. Lieutenant's gag back and searched him. In a small beaded tobacco pouch he carried in an inner pocket I found the map I had looked for so long.

Q. When you found that why didn't you leave, Mr. Dickson?

A. Because I decided that the Kriege police crowds had murdered Brookley and I felt sure they would murder me without any compunctions. With the journal of Reynardo in my hands I was in still greater danger from them. But I thought

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if I could find this formula—this 021 that Brookley had told me about—I could make good terms with Kriege's gang. That was why I stayed. And in the secret drawer I found the 021.

Q. So that you then had everything in your possession—the map, the diary and the formula?

A. Yes. In another half minute I would have been away. But my luck failed. The Brazilian higher up and his agent, Flores, came in on me unexpectedly. I had the drop on them, all right, because they had expected to find no one except Kriege, even if they had expected him. But behind them was a third man.

Q. You were checked by this third man?

A. By yourself, Senhor June.

Q. (By the inquisitor) Mr. Dickson, you testified that you were in hiding across the street when Professor Reynardo was brought back to his home and that you watched until the police left. Did any one else enter the house at that time?

A. No one save Miss Hauser and Mr. Spilnik.

Q. Did you see Professor Reynardo after Miss Hauser and Spilnik left?

A. Yes. I saw him pass the door just after they left.

Q. Then, if he was murdered, it was by one of the four men with him in the house?

A. Precisely.

Senhor June then asked permission to include in the record extracts from the journal of Prof. Reynardo, and this was ordered. Summarized these extracts told the following story:

That Dr. Reynardo, retired and living alone in the outskirts of Rio, had met an engaging young man named Hornaday, a lame man, who had traveled extensively and of whom Reynardo grew very fond. That Hornaday told him of an immensely valuable gold deposit he thought he could locate and talked a great deal of organizing a company to prosecute search for this lode. That in the Summer of last year he finally organized the company and then succeeded in getting hold of a map showing the exact location of the rich property he had planned to find and claim, with his associates, this map having been given him by a sick man named Dercoe who was himself too ill to go on the search.

That very shortly Hornaday began to express suspicion and fear of his associates in the new company, especially of a high Brazilian official and a *Capitao* Flores, in the police. He said repeatedly that these two and the others—men named Fast, Druberg and Kriege—held most of their conferences in a house situated on the hills above Rio, and that if anything happened to him—Hornaday—Professor Reynardo was to direct investigation to that house.

Asked where the house was Hornaday explained that he had never been taken to it by the road, but had been inducted through a short tunnel and up to the house by way of a staircase cut in solid rock. That when Hornaday was worst concerned as to his fate, having refused to give up his map to the others in the company and hourly fearing attack or death, Professor Reynardo met a Dr. Hauser, from the States, and took him into their confidence.

Hauser was equally concerned for his own safety, in connection with a secret formula he carried, and from the same men, and the three decided, therefore, to flee Brazil. Until they could get away it was deemed best to put the map and the formula 021 into small, oilskin packets, and entrust them to Professor Reynardo's care. This was done.

But on the afternoon of the day on which they had planned to flee Hornaday came to the two older men with a confession that he insisted they must read at once.

Here Senhor June interpolated the confession, which was as follows:

I, Michael Hornaday, being in fear of my life, wish to make a statement and confession to you, my kind and trusted friends. What I write here is true, so help me God.

When I was on an exploring expedition in Africa last year I became acquainted with a man named Peter Spilnik, and when we became friends he told me of a lode of ninety per cent. gold he and a man named Dercoe had discovered in Brazil. He told me he had a map giving the exact location of this gold, and even gave me a glimpse of the map. Then he said that there were only two such maps in existence, the other being in the hands of his partner, Dercoe, who was in Brazil.

I tried to induce Spilnik to let me in on the proposition, but he said he could make no promises until he rejoined Dercoe. A little while afterward all Spilnik's effects were burned in a fire—everything, including that precious map.

After the expedition was over I came direct to Brazil, determined to get in with Dercoe. While I was here I learned that Spilnik was very sick and had gone home to the States. I tried to find Dercoe, but was unsuccessful for a long time. At last, in June, I spoke of the rich lode to a *Capitao*

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Flores, of the police, and he told a superior of his, who immediately came to me and practically forced me to organize a company. I told them I thought I could get the map if I had some money, but if I failed to find the map I thought I could lead them to the general region in which the gold lay, because I had had one look at Spilnik's map.

Well, I finally found Dercoe, sick in a sanatorium. I persuaded him that Spilnik had authorized me to act and although he wanted time to write to Spilnik I rushed him so fast that at last he gave up. I was able to give him details enough about Spilnik so that he believed me.

I told him many lies—that was the only way I managed it—and those lies have been on my conscience ever since. Now the men in this company, who have been trying to rob me of the map ever since they found I had it and who, I am certain, would force me out of the proposition once they had the map, are acting in such a way that I fear for my life. I have a premonition that they will kill me. And I want to confess the whole truth to you with that fear lying on me heavily.

(Signed) MICHAEL HORNADAY.

Resuming extracts from the Reynardo diary. When Reynardo and Dr. Hauser had read this confession they decided at once that it was their duty to return the map to Daniel Dercoe. Dr. Hauser took the packet in which it had been wrapped and was about to go in search of the sick man when Professor Reynardo was summoned away by a mysterious message from an acquaintance on the other side of Rio de Janeiro. Leaving Dr. Hauser and young Hornaday together Reynardo had gone, promising to return immediately.

On the way he was arrested by police officers, on a charge of robbery that was not explained, and was locked up until evening when he returned, to find that Dr. Hauser had died suddenly and Hornaday had disappeared. He suspected Hornaday of murder, but the actions of *Capitao* Flores and Lieutenant Kriege, who were in his house when he returned, were so strange as to divert his suspicions to them. An undertaker was in charge. Professor Reynardo saw a body in Dr. Hauser's clothes put into the casket and locked in.

Almost distracted, and uncertain what to do, he had furnished money enough for the rental of a grave for six months and then had spent two or three days in a terrible state of mind trying to determine what his duty was. He was not certain that Dr. Hauser was dead, he was not sure what had become of Hornaday, he could not find the map, and he felt himself constantly watched by Kriege and the police captain, Flores. Feeling powerful influences at work about him and powerful enemies on every hand, he had become ill.

Then—and this was the last entry in the journal—*Capitao* Flores had proposed to send him into the country to recuperate and rest. A pitiful paragraph explaining the plan and expressing doubts of its sincerity and apprehensions as to its true meaning ended with the statement that the writer never expected to return from this proposed journey.

(Senhor June) He did return, *illustrissimo juiz*, as we have been told by witness Dickson—returned to be murdered for knowing too much.

The inquisitor: That much seems clear. I am satisfied, Senhor June, with your showing as regards the probable guilt of these defendants on the conspiracy charge and the charge of abducting both Miss Hauser and her father, and the charge of murdering the man Hornaday. But it seems to me you have failed to connect them closely with the murder of Prof. Reynardo. There is some doubt in my mind on that point.

A. (By Senhor June): I have other witnesses, senhor, but I could not call them here today. I would like permission to state what they will testify to.

Q. For the purposes of this hearing that may be sufficient.

A. They are expert witnesses, senhor, who will show you that finger-prints found on the throat and wrists of the body of Professor Reynardo tally exactly with the finger-prints made this morning from the hands of one of the conspirators in this case.

Q. One of those present?

A. No, senhor.

Q. Throughout the case you and the other witnesses have referred frequently to another man—a high Brazilian official. At your request I consented to keep that name out of the record, though I confess I do not understand your motive in the request. Is he the man whose finger-prints you have taken?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Will you have him in court tomorrow if I continue this hearing until that time?

A. I can not.

Q. Why, Senhor June? Is there a Brazilian official so powerful that he can escape trial on a charge of murder?

A. It is not that, senhor. I have not named him in this case because it could

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do no good. I can not bring him in here to confess to his name. He was at the home of Professor Reynardo last night—was held up by Mr. Dickson and taken prisoner by myself afterward, as you have heard. And before the officers came to find me and bring my prisoners to the jail this man—this higher-up—broke out of the room from me and killed himself.

XII

WHICH is not a chapter, but one word more.

Those who are curious can learn of the fate of the conspirators in the case of formula 021 and the map of the gold country by looking up the files of criminal cases in Brazil. Those who are curious as to what became of the formula can write to the Government of the United States and get what information they may. Those who are curious to know what was done toward finding that lode of ninety per cent. gold ore in the heart of the virgin mountain country of western Brazil must wait until Billy June, Daniel Dercoe and Jan Spilnik return to tell the tale—those three and Mrs. Spilnik, who was once Hulda Hauser.

But there was one thing I was curious enough about to ask Jimmie Dickson, one day this Summer, when he returned from Rio.

"How on earth, Jimmie," I demanded, "did the map of the gold-lode come to be in the pockets of Hornaday, the poor penitent, when his body was disinterred in the cemetery, on that rainy night you spent watching? That's the thing that I can't get."

Jimmie laughed, ruefully.

"Billy June had it all figured from the minute he found Professor Reynardo's journal. Old Doctor Hauser took the map, wrapped in its oilskin packet, to return it to Dercoe. You remember that part of the story, don't you?"

"Yes. That's clear. But——"

"Wait a shake. You've often heard that the cleverer the criminal is the more certain he is to overlook the most essential link in his chain? Well, that was the case here. Flores, the dirty dog—I wish I could go back next month to see him hanged—Flores and Kriege were a good deal rattled when old Professor Reynardo dropped in on them, out of a clear sky, when they had expected that he was out of the way for all night. Their orders were to put the body of Hornaday into Doctor Hauser's clothes and Doctor Hauser into Hornaday's, and then clear out and get an embalmer, quick. And they carried out the plan."

"Exactly. But you don't mean to say that they forgot to search for those two packets, then and there?"

"No, I don't. Billy June is the man who realized what had happened. He put it up to Kriege and Kriege almost cried when he realized what they had done."

"Which was?"

"Can't you see? They searched Hornaday's body, first—naturally enough. They'd just killed him and he was on their minds. Then they stripped him and rushed in to make the change of clothes on Dr. Hauser so that Druberg and Kriege could get the old chemist away to the house on the hill. They just managed to make the change when Professor Reynardo came in.

"So they bundled Hornaday's body, in Doctor Hauser's clothes, into the bed and covered it. They ran back and got Hauser away. And at the first minute they had they searched Doctor Hauser, in his new clothes —Hornaday's—the ones they'd just finished searching! They had juggled so rapidly that they overlooked the suit they took from Hauser—and that blunder cost them the map!"

"The poor boobs!" I said, pityingly.

"Boobs!" Jimmie Dickson cried. "Of course—now, after Billy June has shown you the answer. I want to give it to you as my honest opinion that this long-legged, drawling-voiced South American trouble-shooter would make King Solomon, J. P. Morgan, and the combined faculties of Harvard, Yale and the International Correspondence Schools look like boobs! Didn't he make me look like one? Tell me, didn't he?"

"Uh-huh, Jimmie," I said, meekly. "Uh-huh. He did. Ring the bell again—it's your turn to buy!"

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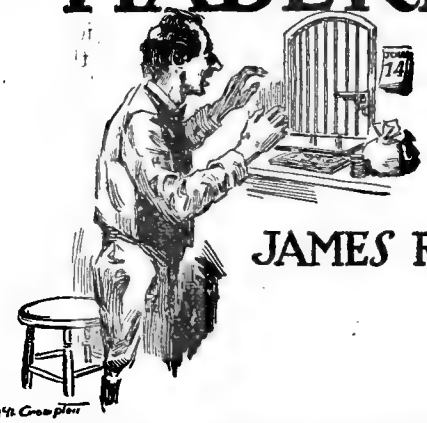
THE HABERDASHER



by

JAMES FRANCIS DWYER

Author of "The Bridging of Malbert Swamp," General Grant's Cigar," etc.

AROUND noontime, during the hot Summer months, Main Street, Placerville, carried little traffic, vehicular or pedestrian. Between twelve and one o'clock you could stand at Exchange Corner and count the passers-by on the fingers of one hand. And Exchange Corner was the busiest spot in town. Here Main and Liberty met, Liberty being absorbed by the principal thoroughfare, while the collision twisted Main out of the straight line which it preserved from Stafford's Hotel, and sent it reeling westward.

The three corners thus produced were occupied by three important buildings. The Chemical National Bank stood at one corner of Liberty and Main, while opposite it on the other corner was the office of the *Placerville Beacon*. Across the big thoroughfare on the corner produced by the sudden turn which Main Street made after colliding with Liberty, was the Placerville Haberdashery, "The Shop of Style," the proprietor of which was Mr. Joseph P. Shelby, "Joe" Shelby to most of the men in the town.

Joe Shelby was a sport. When Placerville made a bid for the big fight between Teddy Rock and "Chimpanzee" Fisher, Shelby was one of the ten men who put up the guarantee of twenty thousand dollars. He bet heavily at the Sunday cock-fighting exhibitions held out at the back of the Los Dos Americas mine, and he was the originator of the "Placerville for Pep" slogan which brought to the town quite a few crooks and undesirable citizens.

At eleven minutes after twelve on a sweltering August day, Joe Shelby, standing at the door of his shop, watched the dusty, sun-scorched triangle of which his emporium was a corner. It was empty. Mr. Shelby looked at his watch and told himself that neither man, woman nor child had passed since Krebb, his assistant in the store, had gone to luncheon at one minute past the noon hour. He recalled a spasm of activity immediately preceding Krebb's departure.

The assistant superintendent of the King Solomon Mine had ridden down Liberty Street on a spirited black horse that was flecked with foam. The mine man had nodded to Shelby from whom he had won a large sum of money at a cockfight on the previous Sunday. The haberdasher perspired profusely as he thought of the loss.

"Confound this heat!" he growled, but he knew well that it was not the heat which made him perspire.

The loss of the big wager upset him whenever he recalled it.

Before the assistant superintendent passed the corner Shelby had seen Chalmers, the manager of the Chemical National step out of the main entrance of the bank and walk swiftly down Liberty in the direction of his home. Shelby disliked Chalmers. Chalmers had objected to the Rock and Fisher fight, objected to the slogan of "Placerville for Pep" and he had

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objected to Shelby's manners when the proprietor of "The Shop for Style" had slapped him violently on the back in the lobby of Stafford's Hotel.

"Infernal prig!" said Shelby. "They should have sent a real man to run a bank in a real man's town."

A feeling of depression came over Shelby after the assistant superintendent rode down the street. He went behind the counter, pulled out a sheaf of letters and glanced at them hurriedly. They were mostly unpaid accounts.

He thrust them back into the drawer and returned to the door. There was a dreadful feeling of inactivity upon the triangle. It looked as if the scorching sun had driven every living thing under shelter. The biting rays had eaten up every shadow patch.

The green blinds of the *Placerville Beacon* were drawn tightly, and Shelby knew that "Inky" Johnson, the editor and proprietor, was asleep in his big chair. "Inky" always slept through the early afternoon, knowing from long experience that little happened in Placerville till the shadows crept fearfully out from the walls to soothe the sun-bitten streets. Shelby dragged a chair to the door, brought forth the sheaf of bills and began to total them upon the back of an envelope. From time to time he would glance at the dust-smeared triangle.

He added up the column of figures and whistled in amazement.

"Eight hundred and sixty-three dollars and nineteen cents!" he murmured. "Now how the dickens am I to get eight hundred and sixty-three dollars and nineteen cents?"

Again he looked across the triangle. Here and there the red sand was lifted by a hot puff of wind that came up Main Street and the little dust devils thus created danced rigadoons on the open space. They seemed to mock Joe Shelby who saw no way to raise eight hundred and sixty-three dollars with which to pay his debts. It was then twenty-four minutes after twelve.

Joe Shelby remained in his seat near the door till 12:33, then the side door of the bank opened and young Hemphill, the junior clerk, stepped out and walked swiftly down Main Street toward the depot. Shelby watched him as he swung along. Young Hemphill was one of his best customers.

Hemphill disappeared in the quivering heat mist that hid the depot and Stafford's Hotel, and Shelby's eyes came back to the bank and the scorched triangle. Mentally he looked inside the bank. He visualized Davidson, the cashier, the only member of the staff then in the building. He saw Davidson sitting behind his grating, a weak, wilted figure, a little drowsy, a little irritable.

He told himself that he did not think much of Davidson. The cashier was no sport. He had supported the bank manager in his opposition to the Teddy Rock and "Chimpanzee" Fisher fight. He bought no clothes, that is, no real clothes. Shelby decided that Davidson was a weakling, possibly that was the reason why he was so well liked. Of course the cashier was a weakling. He was courting Elsie Stafford, the daughter of Ned Stafford who owned the hotel, yet he was in daily terror of Bob Yates, an old suitor of Elsie's who threatened to kill Davidson when he, Bob, became sober enough to handle a gun.

"He's a chicken-hearted fool," murmured Mr. Shelby. "He hasn't got the courage of a prairie-dog."

MR. SHELBY stood up and walked behind the counter. He placed the sheaf of bills back in the cash drawer, and as he did so his fingers came in contact with an automatic. The fingers stole lovingly around the butt of the gun, but they were hastily withdrawn. Mr. Shelby closed the drawer with a bang and walked back to the door. He felt strangely unsettled.

It was dreadfully quiet on the triangle. The whole town was asleep. Of course Davidson, the cashier, was awake. He had to look after the money at the bank till Chalmers and young Hemphill came back. Shelby looked at his watch. Chalmers would be back in eleven minutes; Hemphill had gone to the depot and would probably walk around Pyrites Avenue and eat his lunch before returning.

Again Shelby turned back to the counter. He fingered some silk scarfs and wondered stupidly why he had ordered them. He wondered why he ordered anything. The inhabitants of Placerville did not dress. They were mostly like Davidson, the cashier.

He tore a black scarf from a display bar upon which Krebb, his assistant, had draped it, and again he walked to the cash drawer. He wished to find out what that

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scarf had cost him. Again his eyes fell upon the grand total of his indebtedness. Eight hundred and sixty-three dollars and nineteen cents! And the scarf had cost him one dollar and thirty-five cents!

With his right hand Shelby thrust back the bills, his left held the scarf. The terrific stillness of the triangle invaded the shop. The dust demons swirled by the door and mocked him.

Shelby stared at the scarf and as he stared at it, the fingers of his right hand closed on the butt of the revolver in the drawer. Shelby glanced at the clock on the cash desk, then he addressed the scarf.

"How in the name of all that's beautiful can I get two dollars for you?" he asked.

For a moment Shelby glared at the scarf as if expecting an answer to his question, then with a quick motion he grasped it with both hands, gave it a twist and hurriedly tied it over the lower part of his face. He turned up the collar of his coat, tore a felt hat from a rack, pulled it down over his eyes, then clutching the revolver he rushed toward the door and dashed across the street to the Chemical National!

Davidson, the cashier, looked exactly as Shelby had pictured him. Sitting behind the grating of his little cage he had the appearance of a very wilted zoological specimen. His clothes were certainly very badly cut, they were unpressed, his collar was a size too large, and his necktie was threadbare.

Shelby didn't speak. Before the heat-wearied cashier could move from his window the muzzle of the automatic was pushed into his face, and Davidson's hands were thrust heavenward. The cashier hated revolvers, and the threats of Bob Yates made Shelby's task much easier, inasmuch as those threats, continuing over a period of eight months, had produced in the cashier a mental condition that prevented him from passing the Placerville Hardware Store in the window of which revolvers of all sizes and makes were displayed.

Shelby, still tongueless, pointed to a pile of bills behind the cashier. Davidson turned promptly, seized them and pushed them through the little opening beneath the grating. Shelby glanced at them, saw that they were bills of small denominations and thrust them into his pockets. His forefinger indicated a small canvas sack of gold and Davidson obliged.

Shelby made a motion to signify that he wished the cashier to turn his back, and again Davidson carried out instructions with amazing promptness. The haberdasher touched the back of the cashier's neck with the barrel of the revolver. The cashier emitted a curious little yelp of fear.

Shelby, tiptoeing silently, backed toward the door, his eyes upon Davidson. The cashier didn't move. Upon the back of his lean neck he still felt the muzzle of the revolver so he took no chances.

Shelby peered out at the heat-harried triangle. The spirit of loneliness sat upon it. With a last glance at the cashier he dashed across the street and into his own store. It was four minutes of one. Chalmers would be on his way back to the bank, Krebbs would also be moving toward "The Shop of Style" to relieve his employer. Shelby secreted the plunder, put the scarf back on the stand, and decided that he would watch the arrival of Chalmers from behind a display of business suits that filled one window. He sneered as he thought of Davidson.

Shelby saw Chalmers coming up Liberty Street, then Krebbs appeared on Main Street. A window blind in the *Placerville Beacon* shot upward, and as it did there came from the Chemical National Bank a wild yell of terror, a piercing yell that went out into the stillness producing a thousand echoes that went banging down Main and Liberty, making small sound replicas by banging against every wall in their path!

"Police! Murder! Help!" came the cries. "Robbery! Thieves! Help! Help! Help!"

Chalmers, Krebb, "Inky" Johnson and Joe Shelby supported Davidson as Davidson told the story. According to the cashier a big brutal-looking man wearing a black cloth over the lower part of his face, and above which appeared fierce murderous eyes, had forced Davidson to part with seventeen hundred dollars of the bank funds, had then compelled him to turn his back and after banging him on the neck with the barrel of a revolver had fled.

SHELBY listening intently was a trifle amused and much elated. He told himself Davidson was a bigger fool than people thought him. He, Shelby, was only of medium height, his eyes were rather mild, and there was no black cloth

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in the business. It was a near-silk scarf, then on sale at "The Shop for Style." He wondered how banks could operate when they employed men like Davidson.

Placerville woke up to hear the story of the robbery. The sheriff, Hal Ramsey, took charge of the matter, and a score or more of citizens offered their help. Joe Shelby offered his services and they were accepted. Riding with Hal up the road leading to the Los Dos Americas they spoke about Davidson the cashier.

"He's a bit of a fool," said the sheriff. "I guess the guy that did this job scared him stiff. I bet his description missed by about three lengths."

Joe Shelby laughed.

"It's a wonder he didn't blame Bob Yates," he said. "I bet when he turned and looked into the barrel of a revolver he thought it was surely Bob who was hanging on to the trigger."

"Some idiot went right away and told Bob Yates that Davidson suspected him of the job," growled the sheriff. "It riled Bob. He's just recovering from a drunken spree, but if he remembers it when he gets sober he's liable to hurt Davidson. If I found out the fool that tossed that tale to him I'd hammer him sure. It's hard enough to keep Bob from hurting Davidson now, but if he thinks Davidson suspected him of this job it'll get him plumb loco."

Joe Shelby grinned. Joseph was enjoying himself immensely. He thought of the seventeen hundred dollars hidden away in a safe place in "The Shop of Style," and as he rode along with the sleepy, good-natured sheriff he wondered why the scheme of robbing the Chemical National had not come into his mind before. He told himself jokingly that he would go into the bank-robbing business as a regular profession. It was so simple and the humor of the situation when viewed from the position of sheriff's deputy was so apparent that it required great control to keep the joke under cover.

Although the sheriff and half of Placerville, urged on by a five-hundred-dollar reward offered by the Chemical National, searched for a week the bold bandit was not discovered. Joe Shelby did valiant service in the search. Krebb, the assistant ran "The Shop of Style" for two whole days while his master rode around the mines with Halmes Ray, helping the sheriff to interrogate suspicious characters. Joe and Hal frightened quite a number of foreigners who worked in the mines and who had not been long enough in Placerville to find people who would guarantee their reputations.

Then Joe Shelby went back to "The Shop of Style" and Placerville went about its business. It wasn't a robbery that affected any one citizen, it was bank money, and the owners of the bank did not live in Placerville. Besides banks are not exactly popular institutions in frontier towns, and Placerville, after the first wild rush to capture the hold-up man, became impressed with the belief that the thief was a nervy person who deserved something for the wonderfully planned get-away he had made after the robbery.

"A feller as can cover up his tracks like that chap is some bright bird," said old Joe Goggin. "He's about as unobtrusive after the act as one of those Mexican fleas. They cammyflage right smart too."

Joe Shelby paid his accounts, won a big bet from the assistant superintendent of the King Solomon Mine and felt quite pleased with himself. It was rumored that Chalmers of the Chemical National was to lose his position on account of the robbery, and that item of news delighted Shelby. Chalmer's dislike of the slogan "Placerville for Pep" annoyed the haberdasher. He consoled himself now by reflecting that he had put some pep in Placerville which had brought about the manager's downfall.

The robbery of the bank was a month-old incident, when one afternoon, Shelby, alone in "The Shop of Style," received a surprise. Davidson, the cashier, slipped hurriedly into the door of the store, turned and peered down Main Street and then, looking decidedly uneasy, advanced to the counter. It was the first time Davidson had entered the store, and Shelby, not knowing the cause of the visit, watched him closely.

"Good afternoon," said the cashier, "I—I wish to purchase some collars."

"Yes, Mr. Davidson," said Shelby. "Any particular style?"

"Why I—I don't know," stammered the cashier. "Any kind will do. I only want two. You see—you see, Mr. Shelby, I only—I only came in because there was—was some one coming up Main Street that I didn't wish to meet."

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Shelby understood. Bob Yates had recovered from his drunken spree and the cashier thought it wiser to dodge Mr. Yates.

Shelby was filled with a feeling of contempt for the cashier. He told himself that Davidson was an abject cur and this feeling made him lose all interest in the possible sale. Why should he sell a collar to Davidson because he was giving the cashier sanctuary in his store?

"You're welcome to stay as long as you like," he said pompously. "There's a chair over there. Go and sit down on it."

SHELBY pointed with his left forefinger at the chair, and the cashier turned in a shambling fashion to walk toward it. But he didn't. In turning his blue eyes fell upon the fat forefinger of the haberdasher, and his gaze clung to it, finding there something which drove the fear from his face and brought instead a look of tremendous amazement.

"What's wrong?" asked Shelby. "What are you staring at?"

"The mole!" cried the cashier. "The —the mole on your finger! The man who——"

He stopped and looked at Shelby's face. The haberdasher's left hand had dropped quickly to his side.

Davidson took a step forward and peered at Shelby. For a few seconds there was absolute silence in the store, then Davidson spoke in a hoarse whisper.

"Why you're the man who robbed the bank!" he cried. "I know you now! That mole—I saw that mole when you pointed to —to the bag of gold!"

The tremendous discovery made the cashier forget the fear that had driven him into "The Shop of Style." A great desire was upon him now to rush out into the triangle and scream the news. But he didn't rush the door as that desire prompted him to rush it. Joe Shelby's face made him back toward it, slowly, carefully. The cashier regretted the accusation. He told himself that he had been a fool to tell the haberdasher that he recognized him. He should have gone back to the bank and told Chalmers and the sheriff.

Davidson was within a yard of the door when Shelby spoke.

"Come here!" said the haberdasher. "Come back here!"

"I—I won't!" spluttered the cashier. "I won't!"

Shelby lifted his right hand and the little automatic again covered the cashier. Fear took the strength from Davidson's knees. He fell backward through the door of the store and as he did so Shelby fired. The explosion was simultaneous with another that came from the street, and Davidson crumpled up and fell heavily upon the sidewalk.

Joe Shelby hardly knowing what he did, thrust the revolver into the pocket of his coat, ran around the counter to the door. Who had fired the second shot?

Shelby stopped at the door. Four men were bending over Davidson, while six others were struggling with Bob Yates who held a revolver in his hands. Shelby realized in an instant that what he had at first mistaken for the echo of his own shot, was really one fired by Yates who had been waiting for the cashier to leave the shop! And every one thought Yates the would-be murderer.

Davidson was dying. As Shelby, cool and watchful now, moved around on the outside of the little group that surrounded the cashier, he caught the whispered remarks of those who had a better view of the cashier.

"Got it in the chest," said Pal Ellis. "I bet he's a goner! That fool Yates will swing for this!"

Doctor Clifton came on the run, and the crowd opened to let him through. He dropped on his knees beside the wounded man, and the whispers of the milling crowd were throttled as they waited for the verdict. Hal Ramsey, the sheriff, lifted his eyes as Doctor Clifton sat upright. The doctor shook his head.

"He's outed," said Pal Ellis, turning to Shelby. "I thought so. Guess we ought to lynch Bob Yates."

Shelby didn't speak. He felt that he required all the self-possession he could muster. He was in a tight place. He absorbed the whispers that were uttered near him. Some one said that Bob Yates was drunk, and the scrap of information pleased Shelby. Yates would bungle any statement he might make. Hanlon, the tobacconist, said that two shots had been fired, but that only one chamber of Bob Yates' revolver had been discharged.

"P'raps Davidson cut loose at Yates," said Pal Ellis.

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Every one around grinned. Only a fool would think that the cashier would draw a gun.

"Was he hit twice?" questioned some one.

"No, only once," said Hanlon, then as the tobacconist answered, a whisper came out from the center of the group.

"He's dying," said a voice close to Shelby, "the bullet went in under the right shoulder blade and it's stuck in his lung."

Hal Ramsey dragged Bob Yates forward for identification but the cashier gave no sign that he saw the man. He lay gasping for breath, eyes wide open, hands clenched. Joe Shelby got a glimpse of his face through an opening in the crowd and he took a quick step backward. He wished the business was over.

Again there came a whisper from the core of the crowd.

"Doc Clifton says it's no use to move him," it ran. "He's near dead now. He can't speak."

Shelby breathed freely. The cashier couldn't speak. He felt an instinctive liking for the man immediately in front of him who whispered the news.

Some one burst through the crowd and dropped beside the cashier. It was Chalmers, manager of the Chemical National. He gripped the hand of his assistant and spoke to him in a low voice.

"Anything you want to tell me, Jack?" he asked. "Any message to any one?"

Davidson made a great effort to speak, a tremendous effort. Shelby, head thrust beneath the arm of Pal Ellis, watched. His jaws ached as he stared at the twitching face of the dying man.

Chalmers snatched a note-book and pencil from his pocket and pushed the pencil into the hand of the cashier.

Intense silence fell upon the watchers. Davidson, at the door of death, gripped the pencil. Chalmers held an open page up to him and the dying man's fingers moved with a curious jerky motion, slowly, very, very slowly.

Shelby felt that he was choking. No one knew what the cashier was writing, but every man in the circle would have given a month's pay to find out. Davidson's hand dropped the pencil; Chalmers picked it up hurriedly. The cashier endeavored to grasp it but he could not. It fell again, he smiled faintly, then his eyes closed and the doctor and "Inky" Johnson laid his head gently back on the pillow which old Mrs. Garvan had brought from her boarding-house.

"HE'S dead," whispered Pal Ellis, but Shelby did not hear. He was watching Chalmers and the sheriff. The bank manager had pushed his note-book toward Hal Ramsey and the two were staring at the words written by the cashier. The curiosity of the crowd was tremendous.

A man looked over the shoulder of the sheriff, another, a huge fellow, craned his neck over the head of the bank manager. Shelby thrust a man aside and pushed his own head in between the huge man and Chalmers. He saw the cover of the note-book, then he got a glimpse of the page, and then as Hal Ramsey lowered his hand, the haberdasher read the words. They ran:

robber mole shel

Shelby breathed again. The cashier had died while writing his name.

Shelby tried to work his way out of the crowd so that he could take a great draft of air to relieve the awful smothering feeling that was upon him. He reached the edge of the crowd when a whisper overtook him.

"Doctor's got the bullet," cried a voice. "And it's not from Bob Yates' gun. Bob's is a thirty-eight and this slug is a twenty-five."

Shelby thrust his right hand into his coat pocket. The automatic was there. He told himself he must get rid of it at once. It was his bullet that had killed Davidson. The shot fired by the drunken fool, Yates, had missed.

Shelby worked his way to the door of his store. All around him men were whispering, whispering about the note-book, the words written upon it, the finding of the bullet. The nearness of the dead body made them exchange remarks in undertones.

A big man, standing in the entrance of the "Shop of Style" blocked the haberdasher for a moment. The big man had come late and was hungry for details. He was oblivious to Shelby who was madly anxious to hide the gun that was in his pocket.

"Move away!" cried Shelby. "Let me get into my store!"

"Aw, don't get mad," growled the big man. "Take it easy, son."

But Shelby was upset. He was a little afraid of his looks. He felt that his features

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were strained. He wished to examine himself in a glass. And he wished to hide the gun. He had to hide it immediately.

He reached the end of the counter. Before him was the long mirror and he saw himself distinctly. His face was drawn. But he would be right in a moment. The words in the note-book were nothing; it was the gun that counted.

"Joe! A minute, Joe!"

Shelby turned. The sheriff had entered the shop, followed by the bank manager. The haberdasher, right hand thrust in his coat pocket stood and stared at them.

The sheriff, eyes upon Shelby, closed the street door, then advanced slowly.

"Joe," he said, "Davidson wrote three words before he died. I'm not saying anything and your name isn't mentioned in what he wrote. Leastways not all of your name."

"Yes," said Shelby.

"Joe," said the sheriff, "was Davidson in here before he was shot?"

"Yes," answered Shelby.

"What for?"

"To hide from Yates."

"How long did he stay?"

"A couple of minutes."

"What made him run right out of your shop plumb into Yates?"

"I don't know."

"He rowed with you, didn't he?"

"No."

"Sure?"

"Certain."

The bank manager was examining Shelby's face, and at that moment he leaned over and whispered to the sheriff. The sheriff nodded and turned again upon the haberdasher.

"Joe," he said, "Mr. Chalmers would like to see your hands."

Shelby didn't move, and the sheriff watched the right hand that was concealed by the pocket.

"No monkeying, Joe," he said, warningly. "Come on, show your hands."

Very slowly the haberdasher drew his hands from his pocket and held them out. The mole on the left forefinger stood out on the rather white skin!

The sheriff whistled. Chalmers made no sound.

"What have you got in that pocket?" asked the sheriff, stepping toward Shelby. "What were you—— Well, I'm jiggered! Joe, I guess I'm going to take you into custody. A bullet from a gun like this sent Davidson to Kingdom Come."

The sheriff's elbow knocked down a box from the counter and a dozen pairs of men's gloves were scattered upon the floor. The sheriff glanced at the gloves and then at Shelby's left hand that carried the mole, and he grinned.

"You could have had your size for nothing, too," he said, looking at the gloves. "Bet you had hundreds of pairs of 'em here."

THE ADVENTURER SPEAKS TO THE CITY

BY OSCAR C. WILLIAMS

YOU gave to me a calm I do not crave,
And tell me it is balm for wounds and seams;
I let you bind with chains that make me slave,
And watch you scatter dust upon my dreams.

I let you do all this, because I know
Were I, in boredom, but to stretch and yawn,
These chains would fly, and I would rise to go
And hear again the laughter of the dawn.

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GABOREAU THE TERRIBLE

A FIVE-PART STORY
PART ONE
by
GORDON YOUNG

Author of "Gaboreau," "Murder!" etc.

THIS began where most of my troubles begin: in the street. And at that time which the methodical Fates seemed to have reserved for the prologue of the various little dramas in which I have played a part, a small part; that is, between midnight and the hour that follows.

The street was dark and the night was damp with drizzle. One might have thought the city deserted except that now and then a black shadow shape scurried from around a corner and vanished into an entranceway.

I was abroad, afoot and alone on the streets of New York, because some things of importance were on my mind; and at such times it is well to walk far into the night and give one's self over to the thinking out of problems. I had believed, or at best had hoped, that my troubles with Gaboreau were over; but a few weeks before a messenger had brought to my door a little note, signed with a sprawling "G," and it read:

I will torture you for six months. Then kill you.

"G" stood for Gaboreau, and Gaboreau never made idle threats, though withal he was a cunning creature whose idea of torture might possibly be to make such a threat and leave me in perpetual worry.

I sometimes wondered if I had not become obsessed by the thought—I will not admit that it was by the fear of him or any man—of Gaboreau; for certainly as I scanned the papers day after day, plucking at the news and reading carefully, as I always read carefully, the stories of crime, I got into the habit of weighing the details of each, and of trying to decide in my own mind just which showed the deep, deep mastery of his brain, the skill of his hand. And though I realized that I was in the way of crediting too much to him, that realization did not do me much good.

The intense activity of the German spies, terrorists, blowing up factories and placing bombs on ships and the incidental—if it were incidental—murder of men, women and children, not only filled me with rage against so fiendish an enemy and with anger at the complacent way in which our Government was stowing those spies it captured in detention camps for the duration of the war, when they should have been shot; but that intense activity was so daring, and in a way so baffling that I had for a long time been wondering if Antoine Gaboreau had not been lured by the price that the Kaiser could pay.

Of course, his name was French and he was French, and it was difficult to believe that a Frenchman, even a maniac, could be seduced to harass an ally.

But as I said, Gaboreau and the possibility of his activities had become an obsession with me. Was a man of importance mysteriously murdered, instantly I began judging whether or not it was such a crime as Gaboreau would have committed. When in a most astounding manner a monstrous python was stolen from a zoo, and while the papers, half in alarm and half in merriment, featured the facts and the imaginations of the reporters, I said to myself that the incomprehensible theft was made in such a manner as Gaboreau would have made it: which, perhaps, showed to what absurdities I was carrying my suspicions.

Gaboreau's threat toward myself was, in a way, nothing new. Some months before he had declared in his fierce, high-pitched voice over the telephone that he would cut my heart out and jam it down my throat. He was, I honestly believe, as crazy as ever a man could be; but he had the lunatic's

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cunning—a lunatic's cunning combined with the sheer brilliant mind of genius for crime.

After that horrid threat, which did not move me so much as might be expected, I had heard nothing more from him for a long while. Then came another of his mysterious offers to me, asking me to give him my assistance in work, which he said, would meet with my approval because it was directed against people who needed to have their throats cut.

That was the way with him: always bloody in his words, but not more so than in his deeds. Gaboreau swung like a pendulum between threatening to kill me and attempting to persuade me to enter his service. He knew something of me, and believed that I had qualities that he admired. In our first encounter I had, aided by some luck, got the better of him. I never gave a moment's serious consideration to his seductions. I could not conceive of any work in which he was engaged that would meet with my approval; and he offered no details.

I knew—as did many other people—that Gaboreau made a practise of summoning whom he wanted into his service—that is, among the people more or less outside the protection of the police—and of swiftly and terribly punishing any refusal.

But I was not afraid of him, or at least not terrified by him. I have taken care of myself for some years. I am never unarmed and I shoot straight and quick. Besides, I had friends.

As soon as I received Gaboreau's latest message I had persuaded Vivian to go West to her sister. She did not have the faintest idea of why I wanted to get her out of the way; but I had got her sister to complain of ill-health and the wish to see Vivian, and she had gone. I was living still at our house—a pretentious, big palace of a place in which I felt exceedingly lost—with Yang Li, my mute Chinaman, and George Barton, a butler of my own choosing. There were other servants, of course; a few, but outside of Jerry Kelly they were strangers to me.

George and Yang Li hated each other, which was in a way worse for George than for Yang Li; for though George was one of the strongest men I ever knew, and the Chinaman a withered wraith-like person, yet he, Yang Li, had an uncanny power of inspiring fear without ever showing the least nervousness himself. With an exquisite cruelty, peculiarly Oriental, he would draw from his sleeve and try with his finger the razor edge of a long knife whenever he heard George approaching. But for reasons best known to myself I was sure that neither of them would do violence to the other, and that either would do as I wished.

So it was that as I walked along my thoughts fluttered between Gaboreau, Vivian, George and Yang Li; and though I would smile a little when I thought of the last two, I did not smile when I thought of Gaboreau.

SUDDENLY out of the shadows the form of a man staggered. I surmised that he was drunk and stepped aside to let him have as much of the sidewalk as he seemed to need.

But he straightened with a weak, tottering effort as he saw me, and reaching out for support cried weakly—

"German spies have murdered me!"

He slipped and would have fallen, but I caught hold of him, and drawing a small flashlight turned it into his face.

He said something in French, but I did not catch the words; and the next instant he was unconscious.

As I held him against me for a second I peered up the dark street to get a glimpse of whoever might have attacked this mere boy. German spies, he had said with the accents of truth; and there is nothing this side of hell, or in it, that so quickly arouses my blood as the activity of those vipers—spies and traitors.

I called out at a particularly dense bit of blackness that seemed hugging the side of the building about thirty feet beyond me; and that bit of what I had thought might possibly be a part of the building disengaged itself and whipped around a corner.

I did not shoot—though I was ready to—because I did not want the entranceways of that neighborhood—by no means a respectable one, either—to be emptied into the street on to me. I did not want to explain to a policeman, though perhaps I would have escaped many of my little difficulties if I had promptly transferred them to the shoulders of a policeman.

I examined the boy as carefully as I could. He was slender and young, very young, and unmistakably French, with clean, clear-cut, proud features. Wounded and unconscious, the face was proud, aristocratic. It seemed to me that he was

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literally cut to pieces—at least his clothes were, and he had a gash in the neck and many about the body.

I thought rapidly, or rather I did not think at all, but decided rapidly that if I took him to a hospital the police would take up the case, muddle through with it, or if they did not muddle and did catch the persons who had attempted to murder him, these assassins would be sent to "detention camps," clothed and fed, given magazines and books, housed and cared for as long as the war lasted. My experiences have been such as to cause me to believe I am fully as competent, or a little more so, than the police; and if those German agents came to grips with me they would not go to a "detention camp."

I am one of those things that the socialistic "philosophers" contemptuously call a "patriot." I may not always keep the letter of my country's laws, but where her security or honor is menaced or touched I am berserker; and I decided to take that boy under my own protection until I could locate his friends and offer my services to them; or perhaps I might use what information the boy could give and give some attention to those foreign assassins without the aid of other friends than my own. I have many, and they are dangerous men—for spies.

Just at that moment the first thing for me to do was to find some kind of carriage. I intended to take, willy-nilly, the first one that came my way. I could have carried him some distance easily enough, but I was apprehensive lest he would be twisted and hurt by being awkwardly lifted. I wanted a telephone. There were saloons in the neighborhood, but they were closed or supposed to be. A drug-store was probably not far off, but I did not know in which direction.

I could have made a clamor and got twenty messengers; but I did not want twenty. City life has very nearly destroyed personal initiative in everybody: at the first difficulty, people cry for help, attract the police, the neighbors, strangers, and expect others to serve. I always try as much as possible to depend on myself, at most only on proven friends.

The quarter was disreputable. I do not know why it is that on my walks I gravitate to the haunts of the outcasts and unforgiven, unless it be that I have something more than an unconscious contempt for that society, often termed respectable, which does not cast from it and which does forgive such selfishness, disloyalty, egocentric vices, as are unknown among the wastrels.

I rapped on a door with the butt of an automatic.

A woman's voice called through the unlocked door:

"Who is it?"

"Some one needing help."

A moment's hesitation, then a key turned, and a girl with pallid face and blonde, bobbed hair, looked out questioningly.

"A boy has been badly cut up," I said, indicating the figure that I held against me.

She was in a faded red kimono, and tossed a cigaret from her as she pulled wide the door to let the light of the gas-jet behind her fall on to the sidewalk where we stood. For an instant she thought he was drunk; then she saw the blood, and cried:

"Oh—bring him in, quick. Poor kid!"

"Have you a telephone?"

"No. Want the police?"

There was a bit of suspicion in her voice—a suspicion that she perhaps cherished on principle against the police, rather than anything associated with my request for a telephone.

"I do not want the police." I said it reassuringly, and let her think what she pleased. "I want a taxi—a car—anybody's."

"Come in," she insisted.

I carried the boy in and she closed the door, then ran to straighten the covers on the low iron bed where she had been lying. I said something about getting blood on everything, and her reply was not lady-like, but it was the reply of a good Samaritan.

Having had some practise with the wounds of my friends in places where doctors were not procurable, I examined his, stanched the cut at the neck with a clean handkerchief, took some strips from a skirt—she said it was old, but it was new, perhaps her best—to make a tourniquet for the leg; and with the cleanest rags she brought, first saturating the part that would touch the wound in a solution of bichlorid, endeavored to stop the flow of blood in the three cuts about the chest and abdomen.

The boy stirred restlessly and frequently muttered, while she stood, breathless, tense, alert to help but did nothing. There was nothing to do.

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"If you will watch I will find a doctor—or car," I suggested.

"Don't leave me long," she said, looking at the body, and shivering.

I went out and walked rapidly for two blocks, then turned a corner and started for what appeared to be a drug-store in the direction that she had told me I would find one.

But almost at once a car swept down the street toward me, and I stepped into the street to meet it.

The chauffeur gave me the horn and tried to swerve aside, but stopped rather than run me down.

Then he started to curse. Also to threaten.

I could hear a voice squeaking through the speaking-tube.

"You have a passenger?" I asked, and without heeding his answer opened the door of the limousine.

A woman inquired in a frightened voice as to what I wanted. I told her. She said to call the police—the ambulance—anything.

I turned my flashlight on her and said that I needed this car. I was in the wrong, perhaps. That is what the police and ambulances are for—to be called.

But the chauffeur was still cursing and threatening. I dislike to be cursed; it is even more unpleasant to be threatened. But I recognized the type of woman with whom I had to deal. She was richly and flashily dressed; the atmosphere was saturated with strong perfume; her face was thin, regular, pretty perhaps in some men's eyes; her own eyes were black and her hair was black. She looked avaricious and wicked; by wicked I mean evil, cunning. She demanded to know who I was. She demanded to be allowed to go on her way. She demanded many things.

But she did not scream when I wheeled and knocked the chauffeur down with the barrel of an automatic. The stupid fellow, when he drew back his arm to slug me, did not perceive that the glass on the other door of the limousine acted as a mirror. I did not catch him as squarely as I intended or he would also have been in need of the hospital. As it was he lay for a few seconds unconscious and arose dizzily. He felt long and thoughtfully the rapidly expanding bump on the side of his cranium.

I am rather obstinate at times—particularly with people whom I do not like at first sight. It was wrong of me to commandeer that car, but much of my life has been spent in out-of-the-way places where the police are as scarce as doctors, and among people who make a practise of doing what they think is right. Moreover, I had liked the wounded boy at first sight, and as he was the victim of Germans I felt any measures to relieve him were justified.

So I shut the door in the lady's face, motioned the chauffeur to his seat and taking a place beside him told him where to drive.

WITHOUT further comment he drove as I directed, but much of the way only one hand was on the wheel while the other felt inquiringly at the egg-shaped bump that had appeared on his head.

The girl, anxious over her vigil, had evidently been listening for my return. She opened the door as the machine drew up.

The chauffeur—he doing his part with extreme reluctance—and I carried the boy out and placed him in the limousine, though the lady continued to protest and drew herself into a corner.

I paused to inquire the name of the girl, and to thank her; and was a little embarrassed when with a definite and almost contemptuous gesture she refused the money I offered her.

While we were talking a man strolled up. I say strolled up, which is wrong. He walked up briskly and stopped abruptly. And as he stopped I caught a glance of surprised recognition directed at the woman in the limousine. But it was more than a glance, it was a mouth-gaping surprise, when his eyes fell on the face of the wounded boy. He started on in more haste than he had used in arriving.

"Pardon me," I said dropping a hand on his shoulder, "but I would be interested in knowing your name and also the name of the boy there, whom you seem able to identify."

I knew what I was about. I felt that whoever had been at such bloody pains to put an end to the boy's life would perhaps have continued to linger observantly in the neighborhood. Besides some one had fled suspiciously when the boy staggered up to me.

The gentleman spluttered. He was a short, heavy-built fellow, with a derby that sat on his head as though clamped there, and

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with features—part of which appeared to have been stuck on and the others gouged out of his face.

Now I will go a long, long way to avoid trouble; but once I am into it, I like to have plenty of company.

His protestations did him no good. Whether he knew the woman in the limousine, or merely knew who she was, was something to be determined later. Just then the boy's need of a surgeon's attention was too imperative to permit questionings.

"Get in," I said, indicating the open door of the limousine.

His mouth dropped and remained open after he emitted an astonished—

"What?"

"Who are you?" the woman in the limousine called at me in suspicious, frightened tones.

"Who are you?" the man repeated.

"Yes, who in the —— are you?" the chauffeur put in, truculently.

I did not answer. I caught the eyes underneath the derby and gestured toward the limousine. He got in.

Then I told the chauffeur the address of my home, and I warned him, saying I knew the way, and that if I saw him making detours or turning aside, it would probably result in more than a bump on his head.

"If you wish to go also," I said, with sardonic intent for the benefit of the others, to the girl in the red kimono, "we will try to make room."

For a moment she stared at me in a sort of bewildered fashion, then prefacing her reply with another unladylike phrase said:

"Wait till I get my hat and coat—will you?"

I have not put in practically a third of my life at the poker-table without learning to conceal surprise.

"Certainly," I told her, and she darted into the room.

"Of all things!" said the woman in the corner.

"You'll pay for this," muttered the man.

The boy groaned slightly, and a word or two of French escaped his lips.

Without thinking, the woman replied to him in French, questioned him with sudden intentness.

I asked what she was saying, and she told me—translating truthfully—but she had only asked if he knew who hurt him. She seemed unduly anxious for a reply in the negative.

Then the man said something in German, just a phrase of contempt for me. The woman answered in German. She, too, was contemptuous.

Lest they should think I understood them, I suggested that it would be well to use English. There was a moment of silence; then an interchange of words.

"How much can he know?" asked the woman.

"Who is he?" returned the man.

"What will H say!"

"*Ach!*" returned the man in evident trepidation at the thought of what "H" might say.

I suppose if the initial they made use of had been "G" my heart might have taken a little jump. I doubt it though. My heart does not jump easily. On one of the occasions in which I required the service of a doctor I was told that I had a very subnormal pulse; and the doctor, who knew something of what some people have said about me, explained that I deserved no credit whatsoever for seldom, if ever, getting excited.

I was anxious for the girl to hurry with her coat and hat, but I pretended to be more anxious than I was in the hope that the two would continue their conversation in German. I am not a German scholar. I once had to live for some months on a South Sea island with a German naturalist who understood no word of English and would not listen to one; so, as much of anything, to be able to stir his ire by praising the English I had to learn German from him. However, I can read it if I have to. But they fell into silence after mentioning the mysterious "H."

The girl came out, her bobbed hair tucked under a man's cap, and a man's long overcoat about her. She had taken the time to dress, and to powder her face. The lady visibly turned up her nose at the cheap little good-hearted creature who was coming out of a curiosity as to what might happen. I really could not blame her for coming. I have done much as foolish out of curiosity.

She had told me her name.

"Do you understand French or German, Bessie?" I asked.

She shook her head. She was impressed by the furs and gems of the lady.

The man started to say something.

The lady answered in German—

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"Wait."

"Till we get rid of him?"

"Yes," she answered sharply.

I smiled slightly—smiled at Bessie; and she nervously returned the smile.

Sometimes it is not easy to get rid of me.

We drove rapidly and in silence. From time to time I looked out, and I was not so comfortable as I appeared, for I really did not know whether the chauffeur was following instructions. I pretended to be satisfied.

The boy was propped up on one seat and the four of us sat on the other across from him. We were a bit crowded, but no one complained.

He was a beautiful boy, delicately featured, and his face white with the pallor that comes over the unconscious and dying was contrasted with cameo sharpness against the dark cretonne upholstering.

PERHAPS in your own experience, and certainly you have read in the experiences of others that many times persons who were suspected of being dangerous, and likely to make future trouble, were permitted to go on their way unquestioned because there seemed no way or occasion for retarding or holding them. One of the reasons that I have had a fair amount of success in the little difficulties that have thrust themselves under my nose and required attention, has been due to the fact that nothing like that happens with me.

On occasion I have been embarrassed by retaining somebody who was utterly innocent and harmless, but generous explanations and donations have usually soothed the indignation aroused; and on the whole I have found it much more convenient to make trouble for others than to permit the chance of their making it for me. Perhaps my high-handed methods, if they be that, may be traced to the fact that early in my life, as well as oftentimes subsequently, certain people of importance in one place or another have conceived themselves indebted to me for services, and if it came to the worst I have carried my explanation to some one of them and had the matter quietly hushed.

Now I had seen enough to believe that both the man with the crude features to whom German seemed a native tongue and the lady of elegant attire knew something about the wounded boy. And though I am suspicious of coincidences and luck, believing neither to be a trustworthy source of assistance, as I turned the matter over in my mind it seemed to me not so unnatural as it might at first glimpse appear that my lady and German should appear on the scene and be connected with the wounds of the boy.

True, it was pure chance that caused me to drag the woman to his assistance, but she evidently had business in that neighborhood not unconnected with the boy's presence there; and the German would naturally want to inspect closely what was going on, particularly if he had had any interest in attempting murder. I turned the matter over and over very carefully in my mind, because I dislike to make mistakes; and I am not impulsive, I am not quick-tempered, and what may frequently appear to be rash on my part is always the result of intense, if not prolonged, deliberation.

So when we drove up to my house I very much surprised my companions by inviting them in. My invitation was of the kind that can not well be refused.

The house itself interested them before they were aware that they would see the inside of it.

Vivian had come into an inheritance of rather astonishing proportions; and Vivian, being one of those blessed women who must have some kind of excitement perpetually, had in a restless hour dragged me off to a "residence" in keeping with her income. For something like two months she had found satisfaction in her new splendor.

Even then she would not return to the "cubbyholes," as she termed the apartments that I preferred, and so we had this white elephant of a house on our hands—we, who seldom entertained anybody and had no more social ambitions than a one-time professional gambler ought to have. Not that we were lacking in friends, but for the most part they were of the kind that looked with suspicion upon a great, white, square Colonial mansion-like house. I did not blame them in the least.

The limousine drew up at the curb. I told the chauffeur to go up the driveway, and then had Bessie go to the door and bring George.

George was a stout, bland man, inclined to baldness; a very pompous man, too, and ridiculously impressive. Vivian said that he gave *éclat* to the hallway when he opened the door; and he made me almost irritable

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by his dress-suit immobility and eternal formality. But I knew George as well as I ever knew any man, and he was above reproach.

When George came to the door and saw the curious little creature under a man's cap and wrapped in a man's overcoat, he bowed as though he were welcoming a duchess. When he glanced at the opened limousine, even though the rascal caught my eye and got my message, he pretended to be welcoming guests.

I indicated the wounded boy and said—

"Get the chauffeur to help you."

"Would you be so kind?" he said to the chauffeur.

"What the ——?" that worthy Jehu remarked indignantly.

George's fat red face registered a surprised rebuke. He seemed to let the chauffeur know that it was really quite naughty of him to swear in the presence of ladies; that it was indeed wholly unbecoming to a well-trained servant. George made sure that the mob of servants—it seemed a mob to me—under his supervision were well trained.

"Pardon me," George insisted with childlike mien, "but I need your assistance."

The chauffeur grumbled, got off his seat, appealed by a glance to the silent lady and getting no discouragement from her, gave a hand with the unconscious boy.

"Be careful," I said, seeing that he was not putting himself out to be gentle; and as I said it, George coughed slightly. The chauffeur, too, evidently caught the significance of the tone in which I had spoken.

"My room," I said to George as they started through the doorway. "And send Yang down."

Yang had a closet off from my room in which he lived. There was no window, no ventilation, in that closet; and usually no light but the red tip of Yang's interminable cigarets. But he would live nowhere else, though Vivian had scolded and entreated, pointing out that the closet was needed for trunks and baggage. But Yang, who could not talk and was therefore cut off from argument, took refuge in a mute Oriental's equivalent for "no savvy," and obdurately clung to the closet.

The "lady" and the "gentleman" began to grow restless over the delay of the chauffeur, and showed it by fidgeting about and staring at the open door which disclosed the large hallway, rather barren of furniture. Vivian had said it was not good taste to have much furniture about; though I felt quite lonesome in the big barn of a place, and much preferred bad taste and comfort.

Yang slowly, noiselessly, descended the stairway. Yang never made noise in his movements; and when he wished to be he was as swift as he was noiseless, and had the uncanny faculty of seeming to appear and disappear almost before one's eyes. It is remarkable how utter noiselessness can give one that faculty. Yang was a little old Chinaman, withered and worn and wrinkled, who—unless occasion demanded American clothes—wore a blouse and close-fitting nankeen trousers tied at the ankles.

"Wait," I said, and with a glance conveyed to him that I also meant "watch."

I went inside, taking Bessie with me. I did not know what to do with her, but I took her along into the library—a library filled with sets bound in leather to match the "tone" of the room. Vivian had relegated the books I enjoyed to the attic or basement, because they did not harmonize with the color scheme her pretty little head had devised. I gave Bessie a chair and left her to crane her neck and wonder, while I telephoned to a physician.

I was very particular about my physician. I did not want one who would think it his duty to report the condition in which he found the boy to the police; so, I called Dr. Roberts, whom I knew quite intimately as a man and physician after my own heart. Dr. Roberts was a stern, grim old fellow who put in much of his time treating waifs and strays, and whose heart was, despite his crusty words, tender as a mother's.

I asked him to come at once.

THEN I went up-stairs to my room and paused outside of the door. What I had expected was likely to happen was happening—in fact, the more violent part had already happened, for George was talking to somebody that evidently lay on the floor as I heard him repeatedly telling an "unmentionable" descendant of a long line of thoroughly bad ancestors, all of whom were named and classified, with pedigree, to get up and be knocked down again.

George emphatically belied his appearance. He was fat—like a Jap wrestler. He neither smoked nor drank, and religiously

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flexed and exercised his muscles morning and night. He was a very strong man; and I fear that one of the reasons he was so devoted to me was because I had approved and praised the fierce and sudden use he sometimes made of his strength. George was one of those people who do what all of us frequently wish to do: for instance, if he thinks a man ought to be knocked down he will knock him down; if he thinks a man ought to be horsewhipped, he will go out and buy a horsewhip.

And no matter what his tongue says, his face will rarely show more emotion than Yang's, which is as inscrutable and expressionless as the palm of his own little yellow hand. Oddly enough, George was in deadly fear of that frail, noiseless Chinaman—it was a case of an elephant being terrified by a mouse.

I opened the door.

The chauffeur was on the floor, with both eyes puffed and later to show black bruises, and nursing his jaw with one hand while the other solicitously rubbed his stomach. Whenever George struck out he seemed to hit with four hands at once, and if the situation was really embarrassing, he would also bring his feet and knees into play.

At my look of inquiry he replied:

"Most unfortunate, sir. The gentleman slipped and struck the bed-post. I'm telling him, sir, that we have some fresh meat for his eyes and was suggesting to him a bit of Scotch to steady his nerves."

If a stranger had heard George say that he would probably have believed him. The bland scoundrel went on the presumption that he never needed to justify himself in my eyes.

"Scotch ——," the chauffeur protested appealingly. "He tried to murder me, he did. I'll have the law on him. Big—" the remarks that followed were of an unprintable nature.

"Oh, sir," George replied in a slightly aggrieved tone, "his foot slipped when he went to put the poor gentleman down, and it gave the poor gentleman a bad twist and——"

I interrupted. The chauffeur had evidently been malicious with the unconscious boy. George was to be trusted not to hit anybody without a provocation that would stir the blood of a decent man.

"Get that man and woman in the house. Don't let them talk. Let Yang watch them. Then run the machine into the garage. Leave the girl in the library alone and bring the doctor here."

"Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Certainly. And here is a telegram, sir. I took the liberty of opening it. But, of course, sir, I did not read it. No, sir."

He handed me a telegram that had been laid on the table.

As I glanced at it, George hesitated at the door.

It read:

You will find arsenic in your coffee can in pantry. This is to show you that I hold your life in the hollow of my hand. Some day I will close that hand. G.

It was written on a telegraph blank, it had come in a telegraph envelop, but it had not passed through a telegraph office.

"What is it?" I asked, seeing that George was lingering at the door.

"Nothing, sir, only somebody overturned the coffee can in the pantry—just after the telegram came, sir. I had it all thrown into the garbage. I know you like a large black the first thing in the morning, as soon as you awaken, sir; so I would suggest, sir, if I may, that you sleep a little later. Until the stores open, sir."

There was sarcasm in that, for I am always a late sleeper.

Nothing could shake him. Not even arsenic in the coffee. And even I wondered at his pose and humor which was in the guise of sheer stupidity—for his was as keen and poised a mind as ever worked behind a man's forehead. I had a strong personal affection for him, and he knew it, presumed on it, took all manner of liberties with me, and never, never told the truth unless there seemed to him some unusual reason for it.

The chauffeur started out of the door, but at my suggestion returned and took a chair where he did not keep exactly quiet, but discreetly kept his voice low in his mumblings and threats.

Again I examined the boy's wounds as best I could without disturbing my impromptu dressings. The bleeding had practically stopped. He was breathing regularly though almost imperceptibly. I stood for some time looking down at the delicate, aristocratic, proud features. The high mark of breeding, refinement, was on that face; and I wondered why any one—even German agents—could have murderously attacked that frail, slender body.

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Of course, my own thoughts reverted again and again to Gaboreau. I did not try to hoodwink myself. He did have me in the hollow of his hand. I knew it. I knew him. I knew it was useless to appeal to the police. Gaboreau had had a long career of flagrant crime and remained untouched. He once had hid behind almost a half-dozen identities; and search as they might, the police never caught sight of him. And he a cripple, incapable of standing on his feet.

I knew something—much—of the organization with which he surrounded himself; and even if I had been inclined to run and try to hide, I realized that it was unlikely that I could for more than a moment or two get out of sight of his men. Once he had had a group of four tall, black-bearded fellows, each passing as the other and no two visible at the same time in any one place, as his lieutenants; and through some slight assistance on my part they had been landed in prison for long terms. But—as I might have expected—they promptly escaped, one after the other; not, I fully realized, through any special ingenuity of their own—though they were cunning fellows—but through the aid that Gaboreau was able to direct to them. And it was not comfortable to remember that each of them bore me something of a personal grudge.

But, whether it be long training at the gambling tables, or whether it be some characteristic given me by an ancestor, I am incapable of what is usually known as worry. More than one man's hand has been lifted against me, and some have struck suddenly from the dark; there has scarcely been a year of my life when some unfulfilled threat has not been over my head, and though I am not even now anything like an old man, I am nevertheless alive; and dispite Gaboreau's power, there was no time when I was either panic-stricken or in despair.

No, not even when I actually felt death was inevitable. Fortunately for my own peace of mind I have never been terrified by the thought of death: I sometimes wonder if those about to be born are not thrilled by terror, even as some of us at the thought of death, when life seems inevitable?

And the inevitable is always endurable.

I remained in the room until Dr. Roberts came. I would like to have remained on, but thought it best that I should go see after my guests who were perhaps by that time becoming a trifle restless. George showed Dr. Roberts up.

Dr. Roberts was a lean man, rather stooped, well along in years, and had a long wrinkled face. There was no polish to the man which may account for his lack of practise at the bedsides of nervous wealthy ladies. He was crudely frank with his crisp words, and spoke in phrases rather than sentences.

I took occasion to speak to the doctor in the hallway, and to point out to him that unless the boy's case was extremely dangerous I did not wish to have the police notified, and that he could go to whatever expense seemed needful to give the patient proper attention.

Dr. Roberts grunted non-committally; but I was satisfied.

George told me that the man and woman had been brought into the living-room, and that that "Chinaman who could never be trusted to do anything but murder somebody" was with them.

"But how can he keep them from talking?"

"He can't, sir. But I explained to the gentleman confidentially when he slipped me a small piece of change, sir, that he must be careful as there were dictaphones in the room. I also told him, sir, that the Chinaman was quite insane, which is the truth, sir, as you know yourself, and that it would be dangerous to disturb him in any way, such as by talking—and particularly by whispering. The little man is very much the gentleman, sir. He told me that he would make things right with me if I would assist him and the lady to get away. I thanked him and promised to see what I could do. Hoping you don't object, sir?"

"Take that chauffeur out of there, give him a drink of whisky, apologize to soothe his black eyes and see that he doesn't get away."

"Certainly, sir."

And stepping inside of the door George said to him—

"Will you be so gracious as to come with me, sir?"

The chauffeur arose literally with "black looks" and reluctantly followed him.

I AM vain enough to consider myself a good judge of character—of men's characters. Of woman I know nothing. Not that I have never been fooled by men. I have. But less often

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than by women. That women have not hoodwinked me more than they have is due I believe, not to my discernment but to their indifference. I can tell the common ordinary brand of deceitful woman as far as any man can see her, but the clever woman—I make no pretense of knowing anything about her.

The "lady" in furs was one of those dark, dangerous creatures that make it extremely difficult to tell when they are truthful. You may suspect, but you—or at least I—can not know.

It seemed that I had had remarkably good fortune in getting my hands on her and on the man, too. Call it "luck" if you wish; but perhaps more people would have my kind of "luck" if they had my disregard for the conventions, the safe, proper way of doing things.

I do, or try to do, precisely what I believe ought to be done. I do not say that the good end always justifies the bad means; and there is ever the danger of being burned when one fights the devil with fire. But the Germans in this war have shown all the world that liquid fire must be met with liquid fire, poison gas with poison gas; and I do not propose ever to handicap myself in my little encounters with the lawless, the spies, crooks and fiends, by punctiliously observing those little proprieties that one of decency ever observes toward honest, upstanding men and women.

I was deliberately taking up the fight for that poor wounded boy, chiefly because I knew there was truth in his cry that German spies had murderéd him. And my hand is against spies as against vermin. I will not deny that I like the excitement of a dangerous game.

It certainly does not displease me. But more than that, I like to have a part in beating, beating without the help of police or of any of the mercenaries which society employs to guard itself, such people as, for instance, knife a young and handsome boy whose face was as free from the scars of vice as a virgin parchment.

I went down to the living-room and found that my guests were quite restless. The "lady" in furs could keep neither her hands nor feet still, and continually glanced at her wrist watch. The "gentleman" was busily twirling his derby between his fingers, but he rarely took his eyes off Yang Li, who stood immobile as a statue against the wall some five paces from the "lady's" chair.

I call her a "lady" because she insisted that she was one. I watched them unobserved for some seconds; and as soon as I came through the portières she sprang up and savagely denounced me, saying with a sprinkling of rather forceful American oaths that I would answer painfully for abusing, seizing, kidnaping, threatening, and I don't know what all else, a "lady" of importance in the city.

I inquired as to how much she valued her time by the week; but she replied that I could not buy her off. I expressed regret at this, and she was so encouraged that she promised even more dire things. But she had no way of knowing that her puny threats must leave cold any one upon whom Gaboreau—I am almost tempted to call him "Gaboreau the Terrible"—had passed the death sentence. I asked her to tell me what she knew of the boy. She denied all knowledge, but she could not keep her black eyes from meeting the watery blue eyes of the man across the room.

I asked him to accompany Yang Li into another room; and, though he might have known that violence would do him no good, he seemed disappointed when Yang, whose understanding of English had suddenly become miraculously acute, pointed the way and followed instead of leading.

"Now," I said to her, "you can lie all you please, but there will be no one to approve. You might as well tell me the truth, for, unthinkable as it may seem to you, even ladies of distinction, together with chauffeur and limousine, can, in a city of this size, disappear for an indefinite time. I believe that you have had some experience with the police"—most women of her type have had—"and you must be aware that if you ever made charges against me I could probably convince them, either with words or money, that you were a blackmailer."

She was rather puzzled, and fell back persistently to the question as to who I was.

Then I bluffed—I called her attention to the fact that I had not thought it necessary to inquire as to who she was, implying, of course, that I knew.

She had her doubts as to that, but visibly weakened. There were no more threats, but tears impended. I knew she hesitated to cry because her complexion would be washed off in streaks, even though—as most women do—she rather thought that tears would move me. Men's tears impress me,

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not those of women. When a strong man cries tears, look out! But women—they treat their eyes like dish-rags and wring water out of them as easily.

"You won't let me go?"

"I have said nothing of the kind. I asked why the boy up-stairs was cut up, and by whom."

"I don't know. That's straight," she said.

"Does he know?" I indicated the door through which the man and Yang had passed.

She hesitated, and ventured a denial.

"All right. Who is H?"

"I won't tell you."

"Do you know him—personally?"

"Yes."

"Since we are on initials, do you know or know anybody with the initial G—which might stand for, say, Gaboreau?"

It was a shot in the dark fired with my eyes shut. Except that Gaboreau was on my mind and I was suspicious that he might be at the head of the Kaiser's agents, I would never have thought of asking such a thing. But as I said it she drew back from me in positive fright. She was literally frightened speechless.

THERE was nothing so very strange about that. Gaboreau was a name well known to people in and on the outer edges of the underworld; and he was greatly feared by many, for Gaboreau put to death any agent, tool, or crook that blundered or welched. And he was all the more feared because he was mysterious: few had ever seen him.

"Do you know him—personally?" I asked.

She slowly shook her head.

"You know though," I went on, "that when Gaboreau wants somebody to work for him that he does not inquire as to whether that somebody wished to take up the work. He orders and those who refuse —disappear."

She knew it.

I was on slippery ground but I moved with care.

"Does it not seem reasonable to you that those who have Gaboreau's protection about them are likely to take chances that appear desperate to people who do not know how he both bribes and baffles the police?"

She thoughtfully admitted that that was true.

"And do you wish me to report to Gaboreau that you, through some kind of blind female stubbornness, have refused to give up information that may possibly be needed by somebody in whom he is interested?"

It was a few seconds before the lady caught the full significance of that threat, though she was very much perturbed as soon as I asked the question.

Then she exclaimed—

"Oh, my God, no!"

"Very well," I said quietly, "I am waiting for you to talk."

She hesitated. She began and stopped. She started to bluff, but backed out. All the while her eyes searched my face, but she found nothing there but what appeared to be the calm patience of one who holds a royal flush and awaits the time to play it.

Then she began to talk. She first told me with a touch of hysteria that she had known a woman whose throat had been cut in bed the day after she had reported to the police that Gaboreau had called for her; and my "lady" was quite excited in her protestation against doing anything that would put her own throat in jeopardy. She had known this woman well. They had once shared apartments.

No wonder I thought that she was terrified by the name of Gaboreau. I could sympathize even better than she imagined.

She went on to say that she did not know who the boy was that had been stabbed, or why; that she was in the service of a man known as H though the letter, she did not think, had anything to do with his name. Mr. Smith, the gentleman in the next room, was also in H's service. She had had an appointment with H in the same block where I had found the wounded boy. She gave me the street number. She supposed that Smith, also, had had an appointment. She did not know who H was, but he was not a crook.

No. He was simply a German agent who paid well for information that could be got without much trouble. Oh, yes, she was willing—eager to do whatever Gaboreau might wish—her friend's throat had been cut with a dull knife. Of all things, a dull knife!

She shuddered.

I asked after the information that she had acquired and was furnishing H.

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What she replied was of no importance to me. I do not even now know whether or not it was true. It had to do with the purser on a liner who was to be persuaded to carry documents. I later took the precaution of dropping an anonymous line to a certain gentleman in the Secret Service, suggesting that it might be wise to look up said purser as I understood that he was dabbling in treachery.

"Does Mr. Schmidt—or Smith—happen to know Gaboreau?"

The lady expressed doubts, adding however:

"Of course he's heard of him. Everybody has."

Such is fame. Gaboreau, who was scarcely known among what is called respectable people, was a monarch of the underworld.

"You don't think it would be possible to impress on him the danger that he might possibly be in?"

"You are in with Gaboreau?" she said, expressing her belief with a question.

Instead of Gaboreau being at the head of the Kaiser's agents he was apparently feared by—at least one of them.

"I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that he is very much interested in me," I answered, jumping at the chance to bluff.

Then she begged me not to "queer" her, saying that she had "tied up" with the Germans because it was "easy money" and that she was "in Dutch" with the police because a friend of hers had "bumped off a dick."

The friend, I found, was the chauffeur.

"But Smith," I reminded her. "What of him? I can't turn him loose to go out on the street and cry that he had been kidnaped."

"I don't know anything about him," she said.

"But you?"

"Mum's the word with me."

"But you think that Smith is so confidential with this H that he is likely to talk?"

"I don't know anything about him, except that he is one of them."

THE proper thing, of course, would have been for me to call on one or two of my friends, or rather acquaintances, who were in the Secret Service and confide to them my scanty evidence and suspicions. But I hesitate to call on anybody until I have something definite to offer. A somewhat pronounced self-confidence has always inspired me with the opinion that I can take care of almost any situation myself, or at most with the few friends who are quite close to me. I did not however intend that H should go on his way without my having an interest in his work.

Some experience with gangsters, with spies, crooks and the like has made me familiar with their leaders' trick for concealing their identities behind an initial, like H, or behind some general name. The head of a criminal organization protects himself more elaborately than the head of a trust corporation, and is as elusive. When I had made my search for Gaboreau I had had to take four different men, each calling himself Gaboreau, and hold them almost as prisoners before I discovered that there was a fifth—the real Gaboreau.

Some day I may really learn something about women, and then I shall be relieved of much of the incapacity that has hampered me in the past. I thought this woman sufficiently fearful of the name I had invoked, Gaboreau's, to do as I expected. If I had had the faintest suspicion that she would do differently I would not have let her out of the house until her claws had been clipped short.

"It happens," I said, "that I am not uninterested in your H and his assistants. I can and will make it well worth your while if you furnish me definite information. I can and probably will make it unpleasant for you if you do not. I do not think you wish me to try."

She insisted nervously that she did not.

"Very well. You may leave the house now. Your chauffeur had the misfortune to argue with the butler, and I am afraid his personal appearance will not be as pleasing to you as when he came in. But I think his manners will be somewhat improved, though there is much yet that might well be desired by a refined lady."

She showed concern, a little anxiety—such as a woman has for one she loved—and eagerly, impatiently, asked for details. I told her that he would no doubt loquaciously furnish them; and rang for George.

George appeared, unruffled, bland, stupid-appearing.

"The lady is preparing to leave. Have the chauffeur bring the car around."

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"Certainly, sir. But the gentleman thought he was to spend the night here and has retired."

"What!" she demanded, and began to display agitation.

"Yes, madame."

"The nerve! You pull him right out of bed and tell him to get that machine around here in a hurry. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, madame. My hearing is particularly acute. Is it not, sir?"

And the scoundrel said it with every appearance of stupid earnestness.

"Might I be so bold as to inquire, madame, if you can drive a car?" George asked.

"What do you mean? Is he hurt? Tell me, is he hurt? Of course I can drive a car. What do you mean?"

"Nothing, madame. Nothing at all, except that your chauffeur said he wouldn't take that car out again tonight for a million dollars. He was too sleepy—he said."

"The nerve! Of all things. Are you tryin' to kid me? Get a hump on yourself and do as you're told. Do you hear?"

George withdrew.

I knew something was up. I did not know exactly what until after I had shown her to the door where we waited for the car. It came. George was at the wheel. The chauffeur was sprawled inside, dead drunk.

The lady's indignation can not be properly conveyed in print. It was eloquent, it was pyrotechnical and elaborate. At her instigation George worked manfully to arouse the chauffeur to a sense of his duty, but the most that could be got out of him was a grunt as he would sink back heavily. At last, impatient to be off, she climbed on to the seat and took the wheel, and drove rapidly away.

"Now," I said to George as we went into the house, "what did you find out?"

"Yes, sir. I found out that he liked rye highballs and the best part of a quart is being carried away with him. I expected him to spend the night, sir, and had put him to bed in the basement. He had no papers on him that told anything. But he grew affectionate after about half of the bottle was gone and confided with me that his name was 'Bad Bill' Condon, and that the lady's name was Leonore Musset, and her address is—" George consulted a note-book—"5A Kingston Apartments.

"I took the precaution of telephoning to the Kingston and the information was confirmed, sir. I am sorry, sir, to have inconvenienced a guest by——"

He stopped because he could see that I was not listening. I had glanced through the doorway and seen the huddled, sleeping figure of Bessie in the library. I did not know what to do with her. I could not spare either my chauffeur or George to drive her home, and anyway, I was—though I am not sentimental—rather touched by her pathetic appearance and felt it would not be right to turn her out abruptly when she had come for excitement. If she had hesitated when I knocked on her door, if she had not generously brought a clean skirt, perhaps her best, to be torn into bandages, I would not have felt as I did.

"That girl," I said, "take her up to one of the guest-rooms and let her go to bed. Give her breakfast in her room in the morning. Make sure she has cigarets tonight, and tell her to ring if she wants anything."

"The lady who has just left, sir. Don't you think we had better send her some of our coffee?"

George at times was almost too cryptic for me. I looked at him inquiringly.

"Nothing, sir. It was just an idea I had. I have, as you know, sir, been married three times. My first wife looked like her. I was very young or I should have known better."

"You mean——"

"Yes, sir. I mean that. Such women bring us men bad luck."

I left him abruptly and went to Mr. Smith.

YANG LI had him in the dining-room where Smith sat stiffly in one of the chairs drawn back against the wall. Yang stood across the room, motionless, silent. At a gesture from me he disappeared. I did not look, but I had the impression that Yang had merely melted into the folds of the portières that shut off the hallway. He had a trick of concealing himself, and except that I knew he would never repeat anything to anybody—no, nor write it—I might have been suspicious of his eavesdropping.

My wife declaimed against him and his trick. She did not like Yang, though George was a delight to her. She said that Yang could hide himself where a ghost would loom up like a mole on a débutante's nose, and that he ought to go into vaudeville where people appreciated such stunts.

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Of course, poor Yang had to bear alone the brunt of her anger, for I did not dare tell Vivian that I had encouraged him to keep such a spying watch over her.

It was not that I wished to learn through him what Vivian said to any one, or whom she met. She did about as she pleased and nothing was displeasing to me, for she was one woman that I really knew. But Vivian, ever restless for excitement, ever playing with this or that intellectual fad, introduced into the house all manner of freaks and cranks, and sometimes men fell in love with her and became nuisances. She herself admitted once that it was a great relief, when she thought herself alone in the room, practically alone in the house, to have Yang quietly appear from the nowhere—she never did know from where, or why—just as a stupid man was about to force bearded caresses on to her.

Vivian would flirt. She was one of those flaming women who can not be stuck into a cage of a house and taught to eat humbly from her husband's hand. I never tried to teach her. I loved her. She knew it, and it was to me that she recited with dramatic details and amusing twists the various little episodes and incidents that she experienced. I was not jealous. I might have been if I had ever distrusted her. She had humor, a high temper, and excitement to her was as wine.

When she was in trouble she came to me and promised never, never, never again to be anything but a quiet little housewife and to devote all of her time to warming my slippers before the grate. She might as well have promised never again to laugh, to tease or to scold me. A mermaid might as well have promised never again to get her hair damp. Vivian was part siren, part child and much like the average woman would like to be if she had a husband—or father—or brother—or somebody—that would let her. But she did not like Yang Li; and at that she was not aware that Yang Li was very nearly her shadow.

As he slipped out of sight I walked across to Smith.

"Did you ever hear of a man named Gaboreau?" I asked.

He had. He told me so before he opened his mouth. In fact he did not open his mouth at all, but simply shrank back in fright.

I reflected that it seemed to be a magical name this evening.

"You know what happens to people who cross him?"

He nodded, still not daring to trust his voice.

"Very well. Who is the boy up-stairs and why was he knifed?"

"I don't know."

"Be careful," I suggested pointedly.

"I do not know."

"Do you mean that your information is more incomplete than that Miss Musset was willing to give?"

That rather surprised him. I intended that it should.

"I knew Gaboreau was interested in him."

That rather surprised me. I set my teeth hard, without contracting my lips, and only a much closer observer than Mr. Smith could have detected that I was very much shaken; as much so as I probably ever was in my life.

"So," I replied softly, encouragingly, "you are not as ignorant of the matter as you had wished to appear?"

"I don't know much——"

He stopped. I said nothing. He resumed nervously:

"I don't know much about him. No more'an you do. Not so much."

"In that case, you can understand why it will be best for you to tell me the truth. There may be some facts that I am not familiar with on which you could deceive me; but if I should find you slipping on those with which I am familiar it might be disagreeable. You understand?"

He swallowed nervously and said something resembling "Yes, sir."

"All right, begin."

"What you goin' to do with me?"

"That largely depends on what you tell me. I know that you are scarcely more than a pawn in this game—" one look at his face would tell any one that he could never, in any game, be much more than a pawn—"and if you tell me anything of importance I can promise to let you leave this house whenever you are ready. But that Chinaman carries a keen blade, thin as a razor and as sharp, almost eight inches long, and if you try to deceive me I shall probably lock you up in a room with him. And you had better convince me by confirming what facts I may know that you are telling the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

"But maybe I haven't nothin' important

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to tell?" he almost wailed, slipping his words together in nervous haste to say them.

"I am to act as the judge of what is important and what is not. So it would be better for you to tell everything."

He promised and began.

What he had to tell was interesting to me. It was almost unbelievable, and was certainly incomprehensible. He said bluntly that H was in a war to the knife with Gaboreau—thereby justifying the bluff I had first made with the "lady" in furs. For some reason, which he also supposed was familiar to me though it was unknown to him, H was doing everything he could to smash Gaboreau, and many men were engaged in hounding the fellow. It seemed that H killed everybody he could whom he suspected of being connected with Gaboreau.

I could not imagine a German, even the nimblest-witted of Germans, hounding Gaboreau. I could not understand why there was war between them, but I could understand that if there were war between them why it was an apache warfare. For obvious reasons—because he was a German agent, apparently the head of the German agents, carrying on terrorism that was reported almost daily in the papers—H could not work with the police against Gaboreau. But H had money. He had men and women to serve him, and evidently he meant to "get" Gaboreau. But as a betting proposition I would not have felt safe with my money on H.

Smith was in earnest. He spoke the truth, and he left me in a pretty situation. I could have a very strong ally if I made common cause with the German terrorist, and if I, on my own part, made war on Gaboreau—as I have occasionally made war on some who have been reckless enough to undertake to carry out their threats—I would be aiding the German terrorist!

I did not know and I could not imagine what enmity existed between H and Gaboreau. I knew one to be the worst kind of rascal, and I knew that the other must be even more vicious if he were a terrorist. Gaboreau was relentless, so far as I knew, implacable. He stopped at nothing; and whatever had precipitated the secret warfare between them had, in a way, set two titans fighting down underneath the world whereon unsuspecting good folk went about their businesses. If H could not call in the police, Gaboreau was in a like fix. He hated, perhaps dreaded, the police as much as the terrorist did.

I listened to Smith and said nothing, but assumed the encouraging attitude of one waiting to be told something really of interest. And he talked on, repeated himself tediously, elaborated; but he did not lie. He was anxious to convince me that he was telling the truth.

And I—I was into a patch of thorns. I had allowed Leonore Musset to leave believing that I was high in the confidence of Gaboreau. I had encouraged her to believe just that. I did not then know whether or not she had deceived me, held back something, in not admitting that H and Gaboreau were enemies, or whether she was ignorant. The latter hardly seemed likely.

If I undertook to convince Smith that I was not allied to Gaboreau, he would be sure to compare experiences with her, and I would have hopelessly complicated matters. If I allowed him to go on thinking that I was—as my general attitude and high-handed methods had indicated—associated with Gaboreau, then I could expect also to receive the unpleasant attentions of the mysterious H.

I HAD promised to let Smith leave if he told anything of importance. I do not break my promises even when it is dangerous to keep them. I have never imbibed the Germanic philosophies.

I had never intended to be a more or less animate, but supine, target for Gaboreau; and though I had been entirely aware that all the advantage lay with him, I had intended to carry the fight to him. It looked very much as if I would have to do more than merely try to foil H and simultaneously carry an aggressive attack on him. And if I won against either I would be aiding the other! It was a situation such as I had never been in before.

"This H," I said, "where does he stop."

"I do not know."

"But you were to meet him tonight at—" and I gave the address that Leonore Musset had given me.

"But he never has us meet him in the same place twice. He has some one telephone and say where we are to come that evening. The evening he wants to see us. I don't know where he lives. Next time I may be called to Jersey City to see him. Once we met in Central Park."

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"Is it money you want?" I asked.

"Money?"

"Yes. I can bid against H."

"No, sir. My life wouldn't be worth nothin' if I give him the whatyoucallit—the double-cross."

"It is possible, you know, that I could hand you over to the police as a German spy."

"There ain't no evidence. Besides, he would get me out—or kill me."

"Who?"

"H."

"What will he do when he knows that you have talked freely with me?"

"Nothing."

"Why nothing?"

"Because I can't give anything away. I don't know anything to tell."

"Why," I insisted, "would he kill you if you were arrested?"

"So I couldn't identify him if he was ever caught."

"Has he taken the pains to make all that clear to his agents?"

"Yes."

I could see that H was a man of caution.

Then I asked Smith to tell me something of the boy up-stairs.

Again he pleaded that he didn't know anything "except" that he had been shadowing the boy, Jean Latour, for some time; and that H had seemed "interested in him."

"But you came along the street tonight looking for him, didn't you?" I asked.

"H told me to keep my eyes on him, but not to interfere, no matter what happened. He made it plain about no matter what happened."

"So you watched and saw the boy knifed and did nothing?"

"That's what he told me—no matter what happened."

"And you ran when I shouted at you?"

"I thought you was a policeman—plain-clothes man."

"When was the boy stabbed?"

"About five minutes before you come up. I thought he was dead. He laid still. Then he got up."

"I don't want to have to pry information out of you this way. Tell me a consecutive story. What happened?"

Then he said that he had followed the boy as usual, that he was surprised to see the boy going toward the place where H had made the appointment, that when they were about a block away two men had jumped out of an entrance and stabbed the boy, one of them evidently holding a hand over his mouth to keep him from crying out, then they had run away, and he, Smith, had stupidly followed instructions and waited, but had fled when I came up. He had returned to make sure of what was going on, and had thought it well to walk by when I nabbed him.

He insisted that he did not know any more about the boy than he had told me.

After a few minutes of silence during which time I did some thinking, or tried to, I asked:

"How much is it worth to you not to say anything of what has happened to-night?"

He hesitated and finally said about two hundred dollars.

But he did not get it. I knew that he was lying. I could tell that he would not keep silent for two hundred dollars or two thousand dollars. He was really a dull, stupid fellow, and the expressions on his face were more honest than the words off his tongue. If all mankind should suddenly lose the sense of hearing, there would soon be few crooks left on the earth. Deaf people, like those who play poker, watch the expression on men's faces rather than listen to the words they say.

If I had not promised to let him go he would have spent the night in the basement on the blanket that George had thrown to the chauffeur; but a man who, with some cause, disliked me, once said that I would do anything but break my word, and though he did not intend it as such I have always considered it exceedingly high praise.

I should have talked with Smith before I talked with Miss Musset. But if so, I might not have mentioned Gaboreau at all. The real mistake was when I allowed her to leave. She had very cleverly concealed her agitation by pretending to know a woman whom Gaboreau had put to death. I began to doubt that she had ever known such a woman, but suspected that she had taken that method of veiling her consternation. She had tricked me. Women usually do. It is no wonder that I have time and again vowed to carry a gag and use it thereafter instead of allowing them to talk.

I tried to think of something more that I might ask Smith, but I did not inquire as to his "real" name, or even his address. One can be changed as readily as the other.

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I made some inquiry as to H's personal appearance, and a few other things about him, but Smith had nothing of value to tell.

Then I called George and had him show Smith out.

As they left the room, Yang Li glided noiselessly as a shadow and went up the stairs. I do not know where he had been hiding. He ignored me as he left. Truly we were a household under arms. I did not know what particular weapons, besides his fists, George might have. But as for that, we needed to be under arms. All the servants—there were not many, that is as many as usual, when Vivian was away—were chosen by George; but none other than my chauffeur—an ex-burglar, and a good one—was much trusted.

When George came back he stood very respectfully across the room from me and stated in his blandest manner:

"I kicked him down the stairs, sir."

"Yes?" I said, dubiously.

"Yes, sir. He asked me to give him back his half-dollar. Said, sir, that I had done nothing to help him out. So I had to earn it, sir."

I looked at him closely. George took a pernicious delight in fooling me, and he frequently did—even then he had me doubting. It was useless to protest against his foolery. I never did really protest, for ordinarily I rather enjoyed it, but sometimes it was embarrassing.

"Did you?" I insisted.

"Certainly, sir," he answered gravely.

And then I knew that he had done nothing of the kind.

I WENT up-stairs to my room where the boy lay on the bed and found Dr. Roberts patiently sitting by the bedside. He had done his work and was waiting for me. The queer old man made no pretense of thinking that his time was valuable, and I could tell by the row of cigaret butts carefully laid on an old envelop, which he used as an improvised ash-tray, that he had been waiting for some time.

"Fine mess. Fine mess," he muttered. "All cut up. 'Don't tell the police.' No. No wonder!"

I asked if the condition was dangerous.

"Dangerous? Of course it's dangerous. Tut, tut. Shame."

"Will he die?" I asked with a twinge of nervousness.

"Die? No. My patients don't die. Why should they? But don't try to fool me. He die? What kind of a doctor do you think I am?"

I did not know what he meant and said so.

"No. Course not. Tell me all about it. Everything. I've been waiting an hour. Sunup now."

"I told you. I found this boy——"

"Boy, ——! It's a girl."

I did not say anything for some time. I don't know why I should have been so surprised, because I had remarked the frailty and beauty of the features. But I was, anyway, even if I did not show it. And that romantic, old life-scarred veteran tried to make me tell him some sentimental and dramatic story about her. He would not believe what I did tell him—the truth. He had waited to hear romance. And he was indignant.

It was incredible to him that I would pick up a strange girl in man's clothes and bring her to my house and require the physician not to report to the police the knife-cuts on her body. Perhaps it would have been incredible to any one.

She had become restive and feverish when he was working with the dressings, and he had injected something that quieted her into sleep. I told him to wait until she awakened and get the story first-hand from her lips. He was very nearly tempted to do it. A nurse was needed and he said that in the morning he would send one. The girl was badly cut, but the wounds were clean, there seemed to be no internal hemorrhages, and probably would be no complications.

"Beautiful child. Beautiful," he said tenderly, bending over her as he was leaving. "My daughter would have been about her age. About eighteen. Yes. She would have been eighteen. This child may be a year or two more. Beautiful. And you found her on the street like this? Strange, strange what happens. I'll come tomorrow. Send the nurse first thing. Good-by."

And he was gone.

I quietly paced the floor hour on hour. There was much to think over.

II

I DID not go to bed that night. I did not go to sleep. As a matter of fact, it was morning, dawn, when the doctor left. I did not go to bed until the next night. I had no inclination to

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sleep. There was so much to think about that sleep would have been a waste of time.

I wrote a note or two and used the telephone a few times. I was playing more of a chess than a poker game, and though I had fewer pieces than either of the men I was pitted against, I felt that both those men would find themselves much surprised.

Strange as it may seem to the law-abiding, and as much as the law-abiding may wish not to believe it, the average of the so-called criminal class makes a much better friend than, for instance, the upright church member. I am not defending criminals. Not much. I believe in the death penalty, frequently applied. But what I am defending is the intense energy, the nervous, restless, uncontrollable energy that makes many men criminals.

Sociologists do not consider the lust for excitement, for adventure, in making their wise analyses of human nature; and that lust for excitement, for adventure, for combat, makes some people capitalists and others crooks of another kind. It so permeates and adds its influence to every action of life, invisibly and imperceptibly or overpoweringly, as not only to crowd the far places of the earth, but to crowd the theaters before our eyes.

I doubt if there is a man alive, or who has ever been alive, but wishes that he could at least once be filled with the terrible and ecstatic thrill of having to fight for his life. Some go forth and seek for that thrill; others read novels. If the novels, or the shows, or the movies, are not exciting, they do not entertain; and if they do not entertain they are not popular. The bulk of the underworld is filled with those who prefer an exciting and precarious life to the sober safety of a steady job and the vicarious thrills of novel reading.

I do not justify them; I am merely explaining something of what I have found to be true, and why, when I am in need of friends, friends who will not shrink or proffer excuses, who will make their own breasts into a shield for any with whom they have broken bread—though they may have stolen the platter on which the bread was served—I do not turn to those well-fed people who walk boldly in the daylight, and who readily extend the handclasp to any well-dressed stranger—because with them a handclasp means nothing but a social form.

No. I call upon those like George Barton whose finger-prints were in the police stations of all important cities; like Jerry Kelly, who turned a phenomenal mechanical ingenuity into burglarious activity and drove my wife's car because his own wife worried lest he be arrested; like Yang Li who had done such things as are best not mentioned; and like two or three others who knew they need not lie to me, no matter how much I might disapprove of what they did. So I wrote a note or two and used the telephone a few times.

And perhaps Leonore Musset thought it was some one of Gaboreau's men who later burglarized and ransacked her apartment; and perhaps H never knew that the landlady who rented him the room for the appointment that Smith and Leonore Musset did not keep gave a very good description of the gentleman who had done the renting to some one who later conveyed it to me with that photographic accuracy that is characteristic in the so-called underworld.

I walked the floor and considered various things; and not the least among them was Smith's incomprehensible statement that he knew Gaboreau was interested in the wounded boy, or rather girl, Jean or Jeanne Latour. Interested how? Was it Gaboreau or H that had set the assassins upon her? It seemed more reasonable to suppose that it was H; but it is not easy to penetrate the labyrinthine motives and methods of master criminals.

And though it was something of a shock to find what I had read on the face of a boy was likely to be invalidated by being on the face of a girl—I mean, that no boy with such a face could be other than innocent, proud, loyal; but a woman, so far as I can tell, may appear to be anything and be nothing of the kind—still, after standing by her bed repeatedly for a long time, I did not see how she could be different than I had judged. No. This girl was innocent: few women are that. That is one reason why it is so hard to judge whether they have become sisters of mercy or of the devil, after the bludgeoning that life gives to every one, particularly to women, inevitably to those who are pretty.

The doctor had called her a child. She

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was more than a child. The soft maturity that first shows when maidenhood fades from the face was on her. Gaboreau was interested in her? That was strange, passing strange. Perhaps she could tell why when she awakened.

ABOUT eight o'clock George, obviously wishing for more of a nap than he had had, came with my coffee.

He said that he had discharged the cook, footman, Jap boy and two maids. I asked why. With his usual oblique manner he said that not one of them knew how to make a good cup of coffee. That was his way. He would not tell the truth. His aversion to it was positively appalling; but he could not be said really to lie. He preferred to mention some word, as in this case "coffee," which, if one's brain were nimble enough, would instantly grasp the connection between what he said and what he meant.

He had dismissed the servants, turned them bag and baggage out of the house, because some one had probably been induced by Gaboreau to slip arsenic into the coffee. For all that I know the arsenic may not have been there. Gaboreau was cunning enough to realize that the difference between actually having it put there and saying that it was there was extremely slight as far as agitating one's nerve was concerned. But George had a very poor opinion of Gaboreau if he thought wholesale dismissal and engaging of servants in any wise inconvenienced him.

George said with a suspicious grin that he had told the agency to investigate the references thoroughly of every one it sent to take their places. I reminded him that he always told the agency that.

"But this time they knew that I meant it."

I did not say anything more. If the agency or servants could, as the phrase goes, put anything over on George, then it would be no use for me to interfere. But I did not believe he had called on an agency.

"And the young man—how is he?" George asked glancing at the bed.

"It may sound very disgraceful, but 'he' is a young woman."

George puffed out his cheeks and his eyes for an instant grew more owlish, and he walked across to look more carefully at her.

"Bad, sir, very bad. Birds of ill omen, sir. Three in one flock."

"Three?"

"Yes, sir. That short-haired one in the blue guest-room, that sister of Satan with the black eyes, and this——"

"Go on."

"You can't tell anything about a woman until you have seen her angry. Nothing, sir, except that she brings bad luck."

"And you have seen Bessie—the short-haired one—I mean the other short-haired one—angry?"

"No, sir. Of course not. But I heard her. I knocked on the door and asked what she would have for breakfast. She looked hungry last night. She said to go away and not wake her up or she would knock my block off—her very words, sir—because she had dreamed she was in heaven and didn't want to be disturbed."

"You knocked on her door?"

"She told me to call her early. I was as anxious for her to leave as I hoped she would be to go. I don't like strange women."

"Leave her alone. It is not every one that can dream a house like this is heaven."

About an hour later George brought the nurse up.

Her name was Mrs. Morrison. She was a woman past fifty, brisk and positive. She said that she had received instructions from the doctor and could take charge at once.

I asked her to have me called if the girl awakened and talked rationally.

Then I went into a bedroom and lay down, but not to sleep. I had a plan in my head and was trying to work out some way to make it effective. Obviously, if I wished for a respite from Gaboreau, and wished also to evade the attentions of H, I must either go into hiding or make both of them think I had gone to some place where they could not reach me. I had no intention of running away. But if I could make them think that I was dead my advantage would be considerable.

Better than that, if I could make them think that I had been killed they might be satisfied. To be considered dead requires something more than an obituary notice. There is the doctor, perhaps the coroner, and certainly the undertaker to be convinced. There is the grief of relatives to

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be preternaturally assuaged or they are likely to disclaim the corpse at the bier.

I was in a tight situation. Gaboreau was entirely sufficient to make anybody's life one of trouble. But I knew, as well as I have ever known anything at the time unprovable, that Herr H would not be at all desultory in pressing his attention on to me.

So I played solitaire on the bed and wove designs out of my ideas.

The time goes very rapidly when I play solitaire and think. No one in the house knew what room I was in, which was rather an oversight on my part—an oversight is something I seldom make, too—since I asked the nurse to call me if the girl began to talk. I was first made aware of the fact that I had spent the entire day, without food or sleep, when it grew dark.

Undoubtedly I had been missed, but as I was in the habit of going and coming without saying anything to anybody, no one perhaps thought to look for me in the house. The bedroom was one used by servants when needed, and was up near the roof, which was why I had not heard anything of the commotion that was going on below.

I had no sooner started down the stairs than I heard it. A woman's excited voice came up to me from the hallway on the first floor. She was angry and anxious, she was demanding and inquiring, imploring and storming. I would have known that voice among ten thousand. I made haste to descend, but went as quietly as I could. Things were happening. I could hear her speaking sharply to the servants, and I did not need to see him to know that the perspiration was standing on George's brow.

Once or twice I caught his labored effort at explanations. But George always spoke slowly, and he did not have what is called a look-in.

"But Mrs. Richmond—" he would begin, and his other words would be swamped, lost.

"Let me explain, Mrs. Richmond——"

"Explain! Explain? I don't want explanations. I want to know what this means, Barton. These servants—where on earth did you get them? I never saw such a lot! And these women—that awful creature up-stairs."

"But, Mrs. Richmond——"

"Why don't you say something! I've been here for two hours trying to get a word out of you, and all I get is 'but,' 'but,' 'but.' Can't you talk?"

"If you will——"

"Oh, Rob, what shall I do!" I heard her appeal to some one with her, and for a moment I was badly puzzled as to who Rob could be; but I peered over the banisters and caught sight of a slim youth, very dapper, of about twenty-one to three who appeared to be rather amused but had the good judgment to conceal the fact. And without waiting for Rob to venture any suggestions she continued:

"Here I come home unannounced and find that—that—that creature in the blue room. 'Who put you in there?' 'Please, lady, the gentleman of the house!' And in Don's own room there are two other women. 'Shh—don't talk so loud, you will disturb the young lady. Her condition is serious!'

"Serious? What about my condition! And these servants, Barton, where on earth did you get them? They look like cutthroats. Such faces. They—oh—where is Don? Why don't you say something? Rob, you must take me to a hotel. We can't stay in this house—there is no room."

VIVIAN'S fingers were sweeping through the air as she paced dramatically back and forth in her trim blue tailored traveling-suit. She was slender, not tall, vividly dark, and now she was radiant with anger. She looked almost tragic—and she knew it.

I started down the stairs and said quietly:

"What's the matter, dear? Why didn't you wire you were coming and I would have had Jerry meet you?"

For some moments there was a striking tableau in our home. The eyes of those below were fixed on me. For once in her life Vivian was speechless.

George was the first to move. He wiped his forehead with a large white handkerchief and sighed audibly.

Rob threw a cheery "Hello" up at me.

But Vivian glared.

"Wire you? I'll never wire you! I'll not go again—never—any place. I come home and find—you know what I found. I sent Rob up to the blue room and you know what he found. In your room, two of them. I wanted to scream and that old termagant said, 'Shh, don't disturb—'

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Said 'Shh' to me—in my own house! I'm going to a hotel, I am. I won't stay——"

"Very well. I'll go with you."

And turning to George I told him to get a suit-case ready.

He started off, perceptibly relieved with the excuse to get off, but Vivian stopped him, and turning on me said:

"You sha'n't go with me! I would think you would be ashamed to speak to me, and here you try to act as though nothing had happened!"

With a gesture I indicated to George that he was to get out, and he went, though Vivian told him to come back. I shook hands with my boy nephew, and said that I was glad to see him—though really I was not. I had enough to think about without having my sister's only son on my hands.

"Don't talk to me! Are you ashamed to talk to me? Are you?"

Without looking at her, I reached out and caught a hand, tucked it under my arm, pressed it gently, but continued to talk to Rob, or rather encouraged him to talk to me, for he was bursting with news. Vivian tried to pull away, but she should have known better. She accused me of hurting her hand, but I knew better. She peremptorily told me to let go, but I did not hear her.

I knew every phase of Vivian's temper. I could almost calculate to the minute when it would die down. And I knew that she no more suspected me of what she pretended to suspect than she would of picking a blind man's pockets. But she was intense, often theatric, and like many women she would make a scene if she had half a chance.

Rob was the very nearly spoiled darling of my elder sister. Her idea of me was that I had disgraced the family. She very much disapproved of me—as did most of the others in the family, though I had heard that sometimes when the name of "Everhard" flared for a day in the headlines, that many of those family members whispered to friends that my real name was Richmond, and related to their branch of the Richmonds.

From the time that Rob was old enough to play Indian and read pirate stories he had begged me, with letters and whenever he had a chance to meet me, to take him on some trip or other. And his mother set down his playing Indian and reading "Treasure Island" to my iniquitous influence over his tender mind.

He was telling me that the war was on, and that it looked like "everybody was going to be yanked into the army"—by which he meant that everybody between twenty-one and thirty-one would be conscripted. And he had bolted from home—not to escape the conscription. No. His mother, having made some exhaustive inquiries as to military departments and duties, decided that Rob should go into the Quartermaster's Department, and had begun pulling wires for him. Rob had his heart set on going into the Aviation Corps. The motto of "Safety First" did not appeal to him.

Knowing that Vivian, whom he very nearly worshiped, was visiting her sister at San Francisco he had gone up there from Los Angeles with his tale of wo; and Vivian, finding San Francisco different from what it had been in other days, suggested that they both come to me. Rob did not in the least doubt that I could do anything; and Vivian often pretended to have the same opinion. And pell-mell across the continent they had come. My poor sister would probably be coming next to tell me what she thought of me for luring her young son into ways of wickedness and danger.

At the moment I felt like nailing him down in a packing box and shipping him back to her. But I sympathized with him. At his age I had been shot twice, and even rough men had to be very angry if they did not address me with respect. And at his age, if there had been a war, I too would have wanted to go, not in the Quartermaster's Department, but in the Aviation Corps. I was then barely under thirty-five, but not a doctor in the land would have pronounced me physically fit: I have a stiff knee!

"You'll help me out, won't you, Everhard? You know lots and lots of people. I'm not going to ration shoes and hardtack to other fellows. Not much. I want to get into it! I want to bust into a Zep. I want to bounce bombs off the Kaiser's coco. I want to do something that is something."

Vivian had quieted into a pout. She liked to pout. She knew that though I would not pay much attention when she stormed, that I would pet her when she

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pouted, and she could deliciously delay making-up until I was properly humble. It is an easy matter to marry a woman, but to live with her is different; although the most difficult of all is to live without her, if she chances to be such a woman as Vivian. She has more moods than there are sparkles in a diamond.

I told Rob to go up-stairs and make himself at home, and we would talk it over after dinner.

Rob took himself off and I took Vivian into the library, sat down, drew her on to my lap. Even after I had kissed her welcomingly two or three times she looked at me reproachfully from under her long drooping lashes and would not speak.

"I can't say that I am glad you are home," I remarked.

"Why not?" she flashed, drawing herself up stiffly and preparing to slide off my lap.

"For one thing Gaboreau has served notice that this is a very small world and he needs more elbow room."

She looked at me strangely out of her deep, deep dark eyes—

"Not trying to win my sympathy, Don?"

"Yes. I want you to go right straight back to San Francisco—and stay there."

"I will not."

"You know very well that Gaboreau has only one way of making me anxious."

"What about those awful servants? I'm not afraid of Gaboreau—but I will not have such servants. And those women, Don? What are they doing here? How can Gaboreau make you nervous?"

Vivian was forgetting that she was supposed to have a grievance. She was beginning to coquette with that last question. She knew as well as I did how Gaboreau could make me anxious. It wasn't explanations she wanted, but humoring. So I told her again.

"But how about you?" she demanded. "Don't you think it makes me nervous? And here I come home and find a woman—no, a pretty girl—all bandaged up in your room. And, Don, I don't know whether she was cut up trying to hurt you—or worse, trying to save you! I won't have any woman trying to save you! I won't, I simply won't! And that awful bobbed-haired creature—Don, it was horrible, simply horrible! They have to get out. Both of them."

I SAID certainly, and called for George. It was some time before he came, and I looked at him a few seconds before I spoke. I was under the impression that he was nervous. It was about as easy to tell when George was nervous as to read a palm when the fist is clenched; but nevertheless to my practised eye he looked perturbed.

"Will you ask Miss Brown, Miss Bessie Brown, who has the blue room, if it will be convenient for her to leave. But ask her to step in here before she goes."

Vivian nodded approval. She had expected me to protest, for she knew that it was not like me to send abruptly from the house any one I had invited into it. I knew pretty much what I was about.

Then I told Vivian what had happened. Perhaps I did lay a bit of emphasis on Miss Brown's part, and I did go into detail in describing her shabby room which contrasted strikingly with her impulsive generosity, and I did incidentally mention that she had dreamed of heaven in the blue room; but I said nothing that was not absolutely true. I had not quite finished when Bessie came through the doorway, but I had said enough. Vivian is too tender-hearted ever to live up to social pretenses: she would likely bring a street beggar into the house when giving a luncheon to some Dutch name—if a woman with an old Dutch name could ever be persuaded to enter our home.

George stood in the background watching. In his eyes Vivian could do no wrong. The divine right of queens was upon her. But he was not prepared for what happened.

"You poor child," Vivian exclaimed, putting out both her hands to the shabby, abashed girl standing there pathetically in a man's cap and a man's long coat. "The idea of leaving before dinner! Who ever heard of such a thing! You go right back to that room. It's yours for as long as you want it."

"Why, lady, that feller with the face like a billiard ball said——"

"I don't care what he said. He never gets anything straight. You come with me. I'll have Marcia find something for you to wear."

Marcia was Vivian's maid.

"I'm not—" Bessie began stubbornly.

"Of course you're not!" Vivian agreed, and taking her arm started.

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I suppose Bessie had started to say that she was not going to receive charity. Vivian's mind was electric. She understood at a glance what others had to wait for the full sentence to convey, and taking the girl started out and up the stairs.

I got up and started out too. George was still close to the doorway and with a furtive glance toward Vivian he reached into his pocket.

"Another telegram, sir," he said in a low voice. "And it seemed to me that it was rather close in the living-room, so I raised the window, sir."

I did not understand, but glanced at the yellow sheet.

At nine o'clock there will be a shot through the window and you will need another statue on your mantel. Sooner than you expect a shot just as accurate will be aimed at you.—G.

A small statue of that generally known figure called "The End of the Trail"—an Indian on a pony, both exhausted: poignantly symbolic of the fate that has come upon the red men—was on the mantel where Vivian had placed it "to set off the room."

I folded the telegram—it was not a telegram any more than the previous one, however—and put it into my pocket.

"Tell Vivian that one of the new servants knocked it over. And, by the way, what about these servants. She says they are impossible."

George very nearly changed color.

"It is unfortunate, sir, if Mrs. Richmond has taken a dislike to them. They are perfectly trustworthy and honest."

I looked at my watch. It was twenty minutes of eight.

As though he had read my thought, George said:

"I have told Tony and 'Black Mike' to take a bit of air about a quarter of nine, sir, and that if they found anybody on the lawn to be sure and invite him in."

"Who?" I asked, though the names were familiar to me.

"Two of the servants, sir."

No wonder Vivian had been agitated. Black Mike was about the most forbidding-looking individual it was possible to find in a month's search of prisons; and Tony was a one-eyed, nimble-fingered little cutpurse.

"Who else?"

"'Frisco Frank' has been engaged as chef, sir. And he brought his own helper."

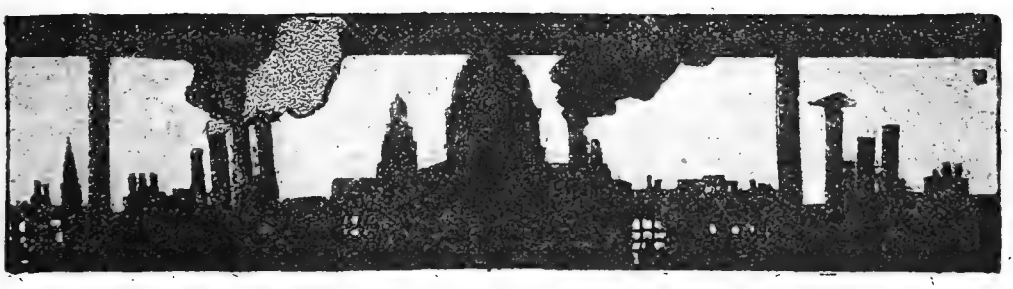
Frisco Frank was an old acquaintance: a bald-headed Swede with a long mustache and the devil's own temper, and so far as I knew no more of a cook than most men are who take to the stove of a hash-house when on their uppers.

I knew well enough why George had engaged that batch of crooks. He had not expected Vivian to return, and he knew that there was trouble ahead for me; which meant trouble for himself, for he had attached himself to me as closely as a man's right arm is attached. Tony and Mike, though not unknown to me, were friends of his, and he had pressed them into service. It would not be well for prowlers to venture close while that gang was under our roof. And circumstantial evidence would certainly be against me if a policeman dropped in. There was no telling what any of those fellows might be wanted for.

I suggested to George that he give me time to think it over; but as a matter of fact, I wanted time to think over something else. Complications were growing a bit too thick for comfort, and not the least of these was Vivian.

Besides, I had something to say to Yang Li.

(TO BE CONTINUED)



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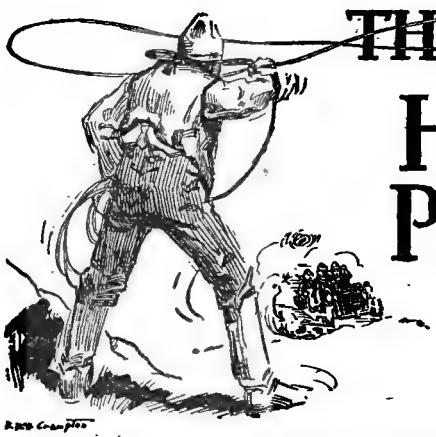

THE HAND OF PROVIDENCE

by

W. C. TUTTLE

Author of "Tied Up For Tombstone," "The Domestication of Dobie," etc.

"MEBBY this ol' place was excitin' once upon a time, but since I've lived here she's been jist about as wild and woolly and excitin' as watchin' a sheep-herder play solitaire," opines Ricky Henderson to the bunch of us on the steps of Buck Masterson's saloon.

"Why," he continues, when we don't argue none, "even the dog-gone broncs have done forgot how to pitch in this man's land. This year of 1895 shore is dull and drab to ol' man Henderson's li'l boy."

"Too true, Ricky," agrees Magpie Simpkins, agreein' with some one fer once in his life. "Why, them broncs"—indicatin' six buzzard heads from the Seven A and the Triangle outfits, which are noddin' their heads at the rack—"are too dog-goned lazy to even go home if they was cut loose. Nothin' short of the crack of doom would disturb their slumbers, and I knowed the time when we used to make bets as to whether our broncs wouldn't tear loose and set us on foot when we hits town. It shore ain't like the good ol' days when—— What in —— is comin'?"

We all stands up on our hind legs, and also does the broncs at the rack. Whatever it was we shore don't de-cipher the sound. We're kumtucks to every degree of noise in that locality from the buzz of a sidewinder to the crack of a thunderbolt, but this sound was somethin' ab-solutely new.

It is poppin' and roarin' down at the end of the street and comin' closer every pop. "Cobalt" Williams jumps up on a chair, and climbs the support of the porch.

"Here she comes!" he yells. "Nothin' pushin' and nothin' pullin'! My Gawd!"

Jist then it emerges from a cloud of alkali dust and ambles straight fer our place of refuge. Them broncs gits back their childhood days in a second, and, bein' as some of them are tied with half-inch ropes there ain't nothin' to be done except to uproot that rack, the same of which they does with great cheer and dispatch.

Immediately and soon them four rope-tied broncs proceeds to sweep the streets of our city with that twenty-foot rack. They begins operations by takin' up the town pump, and then on second thought they annexes Pete Gonyer's cart, which he has jist painted and left in the sun to dry. Pete put in a lot of work remodelin' that ol' breakin' cart, and he won't sing joyfully when he finds it has been distributed all over the range.

Ol' Sam Holt is comin' up the road in his wagon, and he sees the cyclone jist in time. It's sweepin' in his direction, and the ol' man, after takin' one good look, swings his team around, and the last we sees of the procession the ol' man is still in the lead. When the dust settles we inspects the cause of the disturbance. It's standin' in the middle of the street, shakin' like it had the ager, and we recognizes the occupant as one "Scenery" Sims, of Curlew.

Scenery gits his name from the fact that he builds his house on the top of a hill so he can see the country. He's a li'l pop-eyed hombre, without no visible shoulders, and his tracks in the dust can't be told from the spoor of a Piegan. Also he's lousy with money which he made runnin' sheep in the Johnson Hole.

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"Jist about what kind of a —— thing is that?" snorts Wick Smith.

Scenery looks us over with a superior air, and lights a seegar.

"Don't try to keep it a secret," advises Cobalt. "We kin all see it, Scenery, so yuh might as well come across like a man."

"Say, yuh bunch of ignorant grangers," sez Scenery, "do yuh mean to say yuh don't know what this is?"

"Shore, we know what it is," replies Weinie Lopp, "but we wants to hear it from yore own lips."

"This," sez Scenery, pattin' the polished side of the contraption, "is a hossless wagon."

"Well," sez Slim Hawkins, pickin' up the remains of his plaited leather bridle out of the dust, "you shore comes to the right place. This is a hossless city right now."

Scenery looks off down the street in the direction taken by the hosses, and then dismounts.

"Hosses have got to git used to these things," he states. "Down to Curlew they're gittin' a heap used to 'em. The first day there is eight runaways, the next there's only five and yesterday there is only three. It don't take 'em long to ——"

"How many teams was in Curlew yesterday?" interrupts Buck.

"Three," sez Scenery. "Let's all have a li'l snifter."

"What makes the blasted thing go?" asks Cobalt. "She ain't got no b'iler ner smokestack ner nothin'."

"Gasoline," sez Scenery. "I ain't noways familiar with the internal workin's, but I knows that gasoline is the fodder. She cost me four thousand, but by cripes, she's worth it."

"I'd reckon that yuh guides it with that iron walkin' stick," sez Slim.

"Uh-huh," agrees Scenery, with his face full of hooch. "It ain't no trick to run the blamed thing. All yuh has to do is to wind the handle on the side, and she begins to splutter. Then yuh forks the seat, pulls north on that leever, steps on the pedal on the bottom and ——"

"And what?" asks Buck.

"Pray," sez Scenery. "Let's have another li'l snifter."

"Why the prayer?" asks Cobalt. "I don't see no cause for religion."

"Shore yuh don't, Cobalt," replies Scenery, wipin' the back of his hand across his mouth. "You ain't used to nothin' more dangerous than an ordinary outlaw bronc, which is a crawlin', milk-eatin' specimen of locomotion alongside this juggernaut.

" 'Cause why? 'Cause a bronc has got eyes, and don't ordinarily butt his head agin an immovable object, nor git the idea that he's a tree-infestin' animule and try to re-pose serenely on the top of a tree. This thing don't care a —— where it goes. Sabe?"

"Well," sez Slim, "all I can say is that yo're goin' to find yoreself badly disliked in this country, Scenery. I'm commencin' to feel a certain degree of animosity agin yuh already. That headstall and reins cost me twelve simoleons in Miles City this Spring, and I'm willin' to bet that my bronc is plumb ruined by this time from trailin' that rack."

"Sorrow ain't payable at no bank, so I won't say I'm sorry, Slim, but I will say——"

Comes the rattle of a wagon out in the street and we hears ol' Sam Holt yell:

"Whoa! Hey, Buck! Bring me a drink!"

"Come in and git it!" replies Buck. "Yuh ain't paralyzed, are yuh?"

"Hurry up!" yells Sam. "Dog-gone yuh, Buck, hurry up! I got a half-mile lead on that bunch of destruction, and if yuh don't hurry I'll have to pull out. Here they—— Hooray! Hooray! Never mind it now, Buck. They've got crossways of Judge Steele's hay-rack and they can't move a peg.

"What started 'em, Buck?" asks Sam, when he comes inside. "I never knowed that them Seven A and Triangle cayuses had that much life. They done chased me fer three miles."

"Hossless wagon," sez Buck. "Scenery comes to our town in this hossless vehicle, and scares delerious delight out of every bronc in the place. Didn't yuh see it outside?"

"So that was a hossless wagon, eh? I shore seed it outside, but I opines that it's somebody's buggy with the pole broke out. I've heerd tell of them things but I ain't noways kumtucks to their peculiarities, Buck.

"I'm shore glad that it's Scenery Sims what first introduces said runaway promotor to our vicinity, 'cause he won't be missed like a regular man would. Not havin' no wife nor children he won't have

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no one to mourn his untimely de-mise, and nobody will have pangs of re-morse fer smokin' up his carcass with a gun."

"Havin' voted for President Garfield in 1881, I don't consider myself an infant in swaddlin' clothes," opines Scenery, loosenin' the top button of his pants, so his six-gun will hang looser.

"I've et rattlesnake soup and picked my teeth with a bayonet, and jist because I ain't got no wife nor kids to mourn, it don't give me no reason fer voluntarily passin' on to the bourn from which no pilgrim ever returneth back. I hereby states, without malice nor deliberate intention of hurtin' other people's feelin's, that me and my four thousand dollar bronc-boycotter goes where and when we danged pleases. Mebby she goes where I don't want to go, and mebby she causes me to fork a cloud and finger music out of a harp, but regardless of all that, I opines that this is a free country, Sam Holt. Do I speak clear?"

"Yuh shore does, Scenery," agrees Sam. "If I had as many scoops of hooch under my belt as you have I could make a fittin' reply to yore oration, but I'm like you—no speaker when I'm sober. I can say this much, though, Scenery: I don't like yuh; I don't like yore hossless cart and I don't like yore platform."

Sam turns to Buck, who is considered the best rifle shot in the country, and sez:

"Buck, if a machine about the size of Scenery's was five hundred yards away and goin' about twenty mile per hour, how far ahead of it would yuh hold with a 45-70 to hit it dead center?"

"Well," sez Buck, settin' out the glasses ag'in, and squintin' at the bar-bottle, "if I owned a hoss I wouldn't stand so far away. Yuh might shoot low and hit the machine."

"All of which," snorts Scenery, "proves that this here village is backward. Yore satisfied to loaf along on a hoss or in a rattlin' buckboard, but as fer me I ——"

"Yuh sorter spurns the earth, as it were," finishes Weinie. "All I hope is that in case that gas-grazin' animule of yorn decides to mingle with a tree I'll have a front seat at the show. I'd enjoy that—me."

"I'm goin'," states Scenery, startin' fer the door, "but in spite of the fact that my vehicle ain't appreciated by you snake hunters I'm comin' back some day."

HE WINDS on the crank until he jist about busts his gizzard before she starts whizzin', and then he mounts. He slams the leever ahead, digs his heels into the dashboard, and that shiny corn-husker gives a couple of jerks, and off she goes toward Curlew, *rickety-rack, rickety-rack.*

"That," opines Magpie, after Scenery disappears in the dust, "is a —— of a bunch of liabilities fer a man to ride on. Mebby it's all right, boys, but she looks to me—sufferin' coyotes! Look what's comin'!"

It shore was worth a second glance. Out of the cloud of dust, left by the departin' Scenery Sims, comes the remnant of a vanishin' race. Not mounted on prancin' steeds and bedecked with beads, feathers and riotous blankets and stained with war-paint. Not wavin' scalpin'-knife and tommyhawk and honin' fer ha'r. Not any!

This is ol' Chief Plenty Black Bears and his fambly, consistin' of a moon-faced klooch, eight papooses and five dogs, and the whole mess is ridin' high and handsome in a—hearse! The chief opines to be the leader of the copper-skinned Four Hundred of Roarin' Creek, and when he goes visitin' he shore goes plumb stylish. He buys the hearse from an undertaker over in Helena, and the corpse-rustler puts in a high hat with a black plume fer good measure. The chief wears the hat when he drives.

I would say that them broncs were goin' some place. Up the street they comes with their bellies scrapin' the dust, and that ol' death equipage is swayin' and bouncin' some scandalous. The chief has got that plug hat pulled down over his face so the brim rests on the bridge of his broken nose, and he's ra'red up there sawin' on his lines, and every time the broncs hit the dirt yuh can hear him yellin':

"Hoh! Hoh! Hoh!"

He's hittin' a dead center on the street and everythin' is goin' fine until he gits in front of the saloon. I reckon his lines were some patched up, and even good leather won't stand fer too much pullin'. Anyway one of the lines snapped, and, bein' as the ol' war-whoop is overbalanced, he jist natcherally turns a back flip-flop, drops gracefully off the rear of the hearse and stands on his hat in the road.

I don't reckon it was through any sense of loyalty or desire to remain with their lord and master, but the rest of the fambly

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descends one by one, via the li'l door at the rear. Each one spills out, bounces a couple of times, gits up, looks back, and then goes over and sets down on Sam Holt's porch. The squaw, bein' the last one out, has to walk back about a quarter of a mile, while the funerial dray fades out of sight over a ridge.

Nobody thought to cut that hat off the chief's head—we pulls it off, and the pullin' didn't improve the ol' boy's looks any. He fingers his face fer a while, and then looks off in the direction from whence he comes.

"What was yore hurry, Chief?" laughs Buck.

He looks at Buck fer a minute and then points off down the road.

"Seeum diaub!" he yelps. "*Hyas peshack!*"

And then he waddles over to Holt's porch, where the squaw is busy takin' the census.

"Well," sez Magpie, "I'd say he was right when he said that he had seen the devil, and that it was very bad. Don't anybody tell him what it really was, 'cause he'd jist about massacree Scenery. Sentiment is a queer thing, boys. If the chief assassinated ol' Scenery we'd jist about have to hang the Injun on general principles 'cause he's an Injun. If a white man killed Scenery we'd give a dance. I kinda like the ol' war-whoop, so let's let him think that it was the devil."

It's about three hours since Scenery left when we hears voices raised in anger, and we stops the deal long enough to recognize the wau-wau of Pete Gonyer and Andy Johnson, and they're speakin' like men with a grievance on their chests.

"This shore is one fine town, Andy," snorts Pete. "By the horns on the moon, I leaves a perfectly good li'l red cart in front of my shop. It was jist an inoffensive li'l ol' cart, Andy, and somebody comes along and scatters it fer miles!"

"Dang yore ol' cart!" wails Andy. "I got blisters on my heels as big as a dollar and six-bits. That's the first time that roan hoss ever piled me, and I ain't cheerin' none. Piled slick and clean, six miles from home and mother!"

"Yuh can't blame the hoss, Andy."

"You said somethin', Pete. If that hoss had been ridin' me I'd have shore done some pitchin' myself. I'd admire to know what it was."

"Looked like a smoke-spittin' whangobbler to me, Andy. Six miles in tight boots! Aw ——!"

We gits up and walks out on the porch. There sits Pete and Andy and they're shore a tired-lookin' pair of pilgrims. Pete's got his boots off, but Andy's feet are swelled up so tight he can't git his boots off, so he's cheerfully cuttin' 'em off with his knife.

"Been takin' a li'l stroll?" asks Weinie Lopp.

Andy scowls at Weinie, cuts the last boot off, and tries to wiggle his toes:

"Go ahead and tell 'em what happened, Pete," sez he. "I'd do it but they'd say I was a liar."

"Well," says Pete, borrowin' my tobacco and papers, "I don't care a tinker's dang what they say to me. I can't believe it myself but I shore know it came along."

"Meanin' which?" grins Magpie.

"We met," sez Pete, inhalin' deep, "Andy and me, we met—say, Andy, give it a name."

"The whangobbler," prompts Andy.

"The whangobbler," sez Pete. "Me and Andy—aw, Magpie, yuh don't need to grin. We're ridin' slow-like along the road, and jist as we starts around the curve at the mouth of Peel Heel Gulch we hears a rippin' sort of a noise, and right then this said whangobbler enters our midst.

"My bronc don't take time to buck. He jist whirls off the grade, turns plumb over in the air and de-posits me in a mesquite, so what I seen of it was sort of sudden-like. Andy's cayuse r'ars up, falls agin' the side of the hill, and leaves Andy with his boots in the air over a log. Them two hosses gits together and leaves fer parts unknown. I kin almost swear that I hears that whangobbler laugh when we meets disaster."

"Haw! Haw! Haw!" roars Slim. "Yore a fine pair of rustics! Don't yuh know a hossless wagon when yuh sees one?"

Andy and Pete looked foolish like at each other and then Andy clears his throat—

"Pete, that's jist what I said at——"

"You did like ——!" snaps Pete. "Mebby yuh meant to say that, Andy, but the things yuh called it couldn't noways be construed to spell hossless wagon. Not by about four Chinese alphabets."

"Scenery Sims!" yelps Pete, after we explains about it. "That li'l ol' wool-lovin' pelican! Magpie, you bein' sheriff of this

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county, can't yuh act as a game-warden long enough to declare open season on the Sims fambly?"

"The game law," replies Magpie, "includes elk, deer, antelope, mountain goats and sheep. Also it protects at all times, beaver, otter and singin' birds. He ain't no otter nor beaver, and I can swear that he ain't no singin' bird. He's a crow or a buzzard by his voice, the same bein' le-gitimate targets at all times."

"Thanks," sez Andy. "I allus aims to be within the law. Magpie, are yuh familiar with the vital arts of one of them wagons?"

"About six inches above the seat."

"Kerect!" sez Andy. "I don't like to see anythin' suffer from bein' wounded."

And then he hobbles across the street in his socks to git some moccasins.

NOT tryin' to change the subject none, but I'd jist like to remark that hoss-thieves don't show proper consideration fer the law. If they had shown proper decency in their callin' this story probably wouldn't have occurred, or if it did I'd have been in the audience instead of on the stage.

A couple of days after Scenery introduces his machine to the admirin' populace of Piperock, Magpie gits a call to go over on the Li'l Muddy to investigate a rustlin' proposition, and without consultin' my wishes or desires, he immediately swears me in as a deputy and drags me along with him.

I ain't lost no rustlers. Live and let live is my motter, and I'm so strong on the first part of that sayin' that I'm plumb gun-shy. We starts late and reaches Cottonwood Creek that night. Not wishin' to have to hunt hosses in the mornin', we pickets the broncs down on the creek bottom, and while we're dreamin' of shootin' hundreds of rustlers with one hand, while we pins glory medals on our bulgin' breasts with the other, some son-of-a-gun stole our hosses!

All they leaves was, "Thanks," which was wrote on a piece of paper with the charred end of a stick, and hung on the picket pin. Magpie looks it over, picks up the piece of charcoal and writes "Yore welcome" on the same piece of paper and hangs it back on the stake.

"That li'l trick," sez Magpie, "shore prejudices me agin' all hoss-thieves, Ike. Heretofore I've only took a stand agin 'em when somebody gits peeved at their activities, but hereafter I'm agin all hoss-thieves, black, white and red."

"All of which is a noble and upliftin' oration," sez I, "but high ideals and future ambitions don't cut down the distance from here to Piperock."

Magpie consults a cigaret or two before he figgers the exact position which we are occupyin'.

"Ike, we're about eight miles above the main road, as near as I can figger. Suppose we jist amble down the creek, and we're bound to hit the road. Can't be over eight miles."

"And after that," sez I, cheerfully, "we're only got a li'l ol' measly ten miles more to walk before we sees the ol' homestead. This deputy sheriff life is shore great. All yuh got to do is to have some rattle-headed apology fer a sheriff ask yuh to hol' up yore right hand while he repeats a few words which he don't know the meanin' of, and then let him pin a piece of tin on yore manly bosom, and yo're organized to go out and capture all law-breakers and——"

"Walk back," sez Magpie. "Sarcasm is a great accomplishment, Ike, but it don't ease yore achin' feet. Let's git a goin'."

Did yuh ever walk eight miles—the kind of miles of which some hombre guessed the distance, and then added six more to be sure and have it long enough—down hill in high-heeled boots? It can be done but you'll never feel the same toward yore feet agin. Yore toes bug out of the end of yore boots until yuh can hear yore toenails squeak, and jist when yuh thinks yuh can't stand any more torture, yuh stubs yore toes on a sharp rock. Hell hath no fury like a stubbed sore toe.

Shore, we arrived at the road, but that didn't cheer me none. To me it was only a case of subtractin' eight from eighteen. We bathes our feet in the crick to take the swellin' out, cuts holes in our boots so we can git 'em on agin, and limps off toward Piperock.

We've pilgrimed along fer about a mile when Magpie stops and gazes at our back trail. By cripes! I hears it too. Bein' absolutely up to date, my sensitive ears catches the splutter of a hossless wagon, and she's comin' the same way we're headed. I looks at Magpie, and his homely face is harborin' a grin.

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"Why be glad?" I asks.

"Ride, yuh maverick!" he whoops. "We'll ride home in style, Ike."

Jist then Scenery and his rattlebox appears around the turn, and Magpie spreads his long legs in the middle of the road and waves his arms.

"Halt!" he yells, and Scenery heaves hard on the brake. "In the name of the law I commands yuh to give Ike and me a ride to Piperock."

Scenery looks some careworn and scratched. He's got a piece of dirty rag coverin' a cut on his forehead, and one eye is assumin' a purple tint.

"Well," sez he, lookin' us over and then movin' over to one side of the narrer seat, "the name of the law don't mean nothin' to me, but I'm willin' to help a friend, Magpie. You fellers will have to ride that side of the seat double, 'cause this trouble-huntin' buggy wasn't built fer no fambly equipage."

We climbs aboard and away she goes. By cripes, it shore beat walkin' four ways from the jack. While she makes a heap of noise it shore pilgrims along fine, and it did feel queer to be ridin' along thataway without nothin' in front but the road. We swings around the top of the grade at the summit of Roarin' Mountain and dips down toward the creek. Bein' a fairly steep hill, the wagon seems to gather speed at every bounce.

"Better ease her up a li'l, Scenery," sez Magpie, reachin' back and gittin' a good holt on my belt. "There's a plumb bad curve at the bottom, and—my Gawd!"

Right around the turn comes a four-hoss team, with Johnny Myers of the Triangle outfit, drivin', and Hank Padden, the owner of the Seven A, is sittin' beside him on the high seat, smokin' his pipe. All three of us yelled at the same time, but them yells were a plumb waste of good wind, 'cause them broncs were too busy to hear 'em. I seen ol' man Padden hit the road on the seat of his pants, and Johnny was still in the air as we passed, so I don't know jist how he did land. The four hosses went off through the timber, buckin' and bawlin' and makin' light of that heavy wagon.

"D-d-d-danged f-fools!" grunts Magpie, as we sailed over a stump and skidded almost off the road. "D-d-drivin' wild hosses thataway. Hosses have shore got to git——"

Whiz! Spat! Magpie's hat goes sailin' off into space, and ol' Scenery gives her another fork full of gas.

"C-c-c-can Johnny sh-shoot s-s-straight?" yells Scenery in my ear.

I nods my head as much as I can, bein' as it's bent backward from contact with Magpie's shoulder blades, and then Scenery yells—

"Duck!"

I hears a gentle zephyr *oof* past my ear, and then we turns a corner and gits out of sight. Scenery stops his wagon and looks her over.

"I'd say we was goin' right smart," he remarks. "Johnny was shootin' a 30-30 and she jist barely punctures the back of the seat."

He gits aboard agin and on we goes.

"I'd gather from them remarks," sez Magpie, "that you've had so much trouble with this machine that a 30-30 bullet more or less ain't nothin' out of the ordinary."

"Yore mouth was full of words jist then," sez he. "Nothin' can feeze me any more. This danged thing can jist about make a man impervious to any and all kinds of bloodshed. I've seen death and destruction starin' me in the face fer a week. I've wrecked homes, caused twelve-year-old work hosses to go loco and kick the hand what feeds 'em, and scratched —— out of my own face. Today this thing opines to go to the top of Sentinel Butte, and I can't noways seem to change its mind. We goes off the east side with great cheer and plenty of rattle, and ambles half-way down the hill on one wheel. After which we cultivates a mesquite patch. She shore is acrobatic."

WE CHUGS cheerfully along until we're about a mile from town, when we starts down-grade agin. I reckon that Scenery wants to go into town some fast, so I don't pay no attention to our speed until we gits close. I feels Magpie reachin' back fer my belt and bracin' his feet agin the dashboard, and then I ascertains that we're movin' faster than usual.

We enters that town like a steer with a can on its tail, and pee-rades right up the main street. We're goin' so fast that things are sort of a blur, but I sees a plenty.

There's a team tryin' to do a balancin' act on the hitch-rack, and saddle hosses are goin' away from there in flocks, but

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what catches my attention most is a glimpse of Pete Gonyer and Andy Johnson, one on each side of the road, swingin' their ropes. Either of them jaspers is able to pick the foot of a runnin' steer any ol' time, and I has a sinkin' sensation when I feels a rope slap me on the off ear.

We loses Scenery.

He jist seems to e-vaporate out of that seat, and we're so far away when he comes down that we don't even hear him grunt. Magpie slides over into the vacant side of that seat, and takes hold of the steerin' gear.

"Put on the brake!" I yells in his ear, but he only looks foolish at me and yells back—

"Th' danged thing's gone!"

Shore enough it was! I felt a jar and hears a rippin' noise as we loses Scenery, so I reckon one of them ropes picks off that leever. Anyway, it was gone, and all that was left was about four inches of iron stickin' up through the bottom.

Magpie leans hard on the steerin' gear and around we goes like a coyote tryin' to dodge a hound, and in a minute or two we're viewin' the main street of Piperock at forty miles per hour.

I reckon the thing ain't been rode enough to make her bridle-wise 'cause she deserts the straight and narrer way and breaks straight fer Wick Smith's store. I gits a glimpse of Wick, dancin' a jig in his doorway, and wavin' a shotgun.

She swerves at the curb and crosses the street. I sees Weinie Lopp start through the blacksmith shop and fall into the slack tub in the excitement. Magpie seems to git control once more and heads her for Sam Holt's picket fence. She don't shy none this time.

Comes a *thr-r-r-r-r-rup* and what I sees looks like an explosion in a shingle mill.

"Ike," yells Magpie, as we saunters out of town agin, "hang on tight! I don't know how long the danged thing's wound up fer, and I ain't goin' to have to walk back when she quits."

"Tend to yore drivin'!" I yells, easin' myself in the saddle, as we hops over a pile of boulders. "This ain't no time fer conversational promises nor flights of fancy. Where yuh goin'?"

"B-back to town!" he yelps, as he ports his helm, and we spins on one wheel in the space of a saddle blanket.

I reckon the whole population of our fair city is out to see the pee-rade this time. I spies a pedal sort of a dingus in the bottom of the wagon, and I yells in Magpie's ear, and points it out to him:

"Why don't yuh step on that thing? Mebby it's the brake!"

He nods his head, and does jist what I suggests. By cripes!

That outlaw piece of machinery gives a roar and bores straight fer the audience. Scatter? Well, some! One greaser, named Pete Gomez, was caught flatfooted, and when he comes down he drapes over the hay scales like a sack on a clothes-line. It was all done so danged quick-like that all we gits is a sort of a general impression, and then we're out of the other side of town and goin' fast.

"Yuh might give that thing a rest!" I yells at Magpie, pointin' at his boot which is still loafin' on that pedal.

"Yah!" he yells back, jist missin' a mesquite thicket by a hair. "That thing ain't no brake, Ike!"

"No, it shore ain't!" I agrees at the top of my voice. "That's one part of the danged thing that we know ain't what we thinks it might have been. Look out fer that—Gawd!"

"Quit yore yellin', Ike! Dog-gone it, I missed that steer a foot."

"Where yuh goin' now?" I asks mildly curious-like.

"Town!" he yells above the roar of that instrument of destruction, and back we shore does go.

Magpie gits sort of careless-like this time. I reckon that familiarity breeds contempt, and Magpie's been doin' so well that he lolls back in the saddle and misses his location to the extent that we climbs the board sidewalk of the first house. Not carin' to do a sidewalk exhibition we cuts back into the street, takin' one of the props from under Jimmie Peyton's chop-house porch, and bends the front axle of our mount so she runs a heap bow-legged. It don't seem to affect her speed none but she seems to misjudge direction somethin' scandalous.

"Look!" I yells, grabbin' Magpie by the arm and pointin' up the street. "They're adoptin' the block system!"

They've run one empty wagon and one load of hay into the street so it's impossible fer us to go through, and they knows danged well that in spite of the fact that we've got some acrobatic buggy she ain't equal to no such jump as that.

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I glances at Magpie. His mouth is wide open, and yuh could hang yore hat on his eyes when he sees what we're up against. He simply stares and drives to our doom.

I've heard tell that in a case like that a feller's past life comes up and slaps him in the face. Mine didn't. We was goin' so fast that all I could remember was that one of my red drawers legs was tore off at the knee and that my mismated socks were full of holes.

I reckon that Magpie was dazed some, and I jist gits presence of mind enough to grab his arm and yell—

"Pick the hay, yuh blasted fool!"

Yuh see, he was steerin' straight fer the empty wagon. I don't know whether I pulls hard on his arm and whether the yell does the business, but anyway we didn't hit that wagon a-tall. We turns like a steer tryin' to git back to the main herd, and hits the hitch-rack square in the middle.

The four by six across the top of the rack is jist high enough to hit the bottom of the seat. When we swerves, we natcherally rests on our shoulder blades with our boots in the air, and that cross-piece picks the seat right off. Bein' as we're on the seat, it's some pickin's.

I remembers gittin' a view of Piperock upside down, and I sees a boot heel above me which I identifies as belongin' to Magpie, so from that I'd opine that he broke all altitude records, and then somebody blows out the lights.

I reckon I'm a li'l off in the head, 'cause there seems to be people twenty feet tall all around me, and I hears a voice—sounded somethin' like Pete Gonyer's—sayin'—

"Mebby he'll pull through."

And then another giant speaks up and says—

"Don't be joyful, he may live."

And then I turns into a beautiful dove, and I'm flyin' along in the clouds, and I sees another dove which is Magpie, and we're flyin' in opposite directions. Fer some reason neither of us can turn out, and we meets in the air in one awful smash. I feels the life-blood flowin' out of my beautiful beak, and then I wakes up long enough to hear Buck Masterson yell:

"Don't spill all that good hooch, Slim! If he's too dead to swaller likker there's no use forcin' it down!"

I sets up and looks around.

Magpie is settin' on the pool-table holdin' his head in his hands, and Scenery Sims is slumped down in a chair, with a half-full bottle hangin' loose-like in his hand, and he's starin' at a knot-hole in the floor.

"Well," sez I, sizin' up the assemblage, "we seem to have stopped."

"Uh-huh," agrees Buck, "it would seem that way. What was you fellers tryin' to do—make a hossless racetrack out of our main street?"

Bein' a meek sort of a person, I'm jist about to make a soft answer when—

Bang! The windows rattled, and a pitcher fell off the wall and busts a couple of bottles on the bar.

"What the —— was that!" yelps Buck. "Sounded like——"

Sam Holt stumbles inside, and I sees him tryin' to stuff into his pants pocket what looks to me like a piece o' blastin' fuse.

"Say," sez he, before any one else has time to ask a question, "that danged machine didn't show no judgment whatever! She stops out there on the flat, right over a place where I've done cached twelve sticks of dynamite. I plants it there 'cause nobody ever knows when that stuff is due to bust. I reckon it was the hand of Providence, Scenery."

Scenery sets that bottle carefully on the table, wabbles over to Sam and sticks out his hand.

"Sam," sez he, "yore a bringer of good news. You've done saved this remnant of the Sims tribe from dyin' with its boots on, and jist to show that there ain't no hard feelins I'd like to shake hands, and inquire the price o' hossflesh."

And the hand of Providence and the hand of Scenery Sims met.

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FLOTSAM

by

S. B. H. HURST

Author of "Maze of Memory," "On the Far Edge," etc.

THE irony of such a handle would have appealed to Deziers. Observe him—with yet a certain inherent daintiness he could never quite throw overboard—eating unpleasantly prepared fish, outside a hut, some yards from the sea, far north of where Nome is now. Jack Boyle had said of him—this was prior to 1900, and of the four "wheels" in Jack's place three were crooked, and one square; and to play safe, the square "wheel" was never the same two days in succession—Boyle said:

"He ain't a bad gent, when you get to know him; but he's too tough for any camp I've ever been in!"

A kindly testimonial regarding one with an unbroken pedigree back to William's knights! "Look for the woman"—but that would be a search beyond us, besides being a proceeding lacking in delicacy. Somewhere, some time, somehow, Deziers had "gone wrong." To look at him, you would think he had always been "wrong." But now and then an echo of his past vibrated in his mind, giving you a momentary glimpse of a time when he was not "wrong." This tells of one of those echoes.

He was eating fish among strange-scented natives. A chill wind blew off the sea, whipping the tops off the waves, and distributing the smell. Near him, another Caucasian was also eating fish; but a chemical analysis of that other would have failed of finding any refinement. And in that one's soul were no echoes. He believed in the "equality of man" so strongly that he could see no need for self-improvement—which is one reason anarchists seldom wash. Consider the statement a moment—it is not a riddle.

The fish satisfied their hunger. The natives were either hospitable or afraid, and refrained from asking the white men any questions. The white men had not met before that morning—they seemed to have been cast into that village by a world ridding itself, as a dog does of fleas, as anything does of things that irritate.

And both of them were well aware of that racial superiority which entitled them to eat at the expense of the lower race—to eat the fish that lower race worked to procure. In a more civilized community they would have joined the I. W. W.

They lacked tobacco, so they "borrowed" some from the village head man. "Slimy" Jones—the descriptive name of the other white—was stimulated by the tobacco; Deziers lay down to enjoy his. And Slimy, prying around like a sneak-thief in a police-less land, made a discovery—to wit, that certain maidens of the tribe had been restrained from showing their charms to the possible amorous glances of the very unwelcome visitors. Which offended Slimy. His sensitive disposition saw a fancied slight. But he said nothing about his hurt feelings—making a mental note of the girls' dwelling—for there were limits to the submissiveness of the natives, which Slimy understood.

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But the devils living in his subconscious mind got busy with the sight of his eyes, and brewed a scheme. Slimy did not feel amorous, but it was a beautiful scheme—a scheme well worthy of Slimy. But he felt that it would be incumbent upon him to reckon with Deziers—or "Dick Warren," as that gentleman chose to call himself at that epoch; not because he wanted to, but because it would be easier. After the affair reached a successful culmination, some way would be found of ditching Warren; but in the meantime a full partnership was imperative.

And the plan was as simple as it was sordid. And if the natives made too early a discovery, and too vigorous an argument although, of course, stealth was expected to avoid all this—why, then both Warren and himself had revolvers. And revolvers carried farther, and were more deadly, than fish-spears or seal-clubs. That Warren would be susceptible of approach was a foregone conclusion. Slimy would find him, and mention the matter.

But Warren—as we will call him—was not in evidence. Like Slimy, he had gone prospecting. The lethargy of fish and bad tobacco had left him, and an unusual energy had taken him along the beach. The short day was shrouding into the first grayness of evening. Inland, an early fall of snow threw a tinted glow back to the dull sky. The man's feet crunched harshly on the shingle.

Suddenly he paused, and looked hurriedly seaward. He continued to stare. He might have been mistaken, but whatever the animal was that dipped between two waves about a hundred yards from the beach, it had looked in the dusk remarkably like a sea-otter. And a sea-otter meant money. He was delayed, finding a kyak; and when at last he pushed out and began paddling on what he fondly hoped was the otter's trail, it was quite dark. And there was a wicked undertone in the wind, holding a shiver not due to the falling temperature.

But for gold or sea-otters men will dare much—a perhaps pardonable truism—and Warren urged the light craft as well as his small skill with the paddle permitted. But he did not find the sea-otter, neither did he come upon anything that looked like one. Instead, he lost himself, farther out to sea than he had intended going, with a rising gale making dangerous water, and a sudden snow squall completing the peril.

With the waves dashing the spray in his face, and barely able to keep the canoe breasting them, he strove for a sense of direction. The wind had been off the sea when he put out: consequently, to run before it, hazardous as it was, was to make land. He managed to wear ship, taking aboard an unpleasant quantity of water during the operation. Then he began to paddle frantically to keep ahead of the following seas, mentally cursing sea-otters and his own foolhardiness—for breath was too valuable to waste on language.

And always the spray stung him and the snow blinded him, but he reached no land. Nor could he hear the surf beating above the noise of the wind, as he would have done on nearing shore. Then an agony of thought chilled him. He stopped paddling unconsciously, but fell too again as the kyak fell off into the trough. It had occurred to him that the wind must have shifted, and that, therefore, as a compass, it was useless.

In spite of what he was, and of what he had done and left undone, Warren was no coward. But this was a situation calculated to terrify the bravest of sailors, and Warren lacked the sailor's skill and knowledge. Even an Indian might well have doubted his ability to find his way home—that is, if one can imagine an Indian getting into such a predicament, without food or proper clothing.

Warren called himself a fool for going after the sea-otter—if the thing he had seen had been a sea-otter; and he now wasted energy cursing aloud at the snow and sea—his mouthings sometimes flooded with salt water. And the snow and spray so shrouded him that he seemed to be a part of them—like the very air he breathed, they enveloped him, adding opacity to the darkness. And he had grown very tired. He was not a weakling, but paddling a kyak was an unusual exercise, and the unaccustomed muscles revolted at every call he made upon them.

"Well," he thought finally, "it's no use working when I don't know my way. May as well let things go—for anything I know, I may be miles out to sea, and going further from land every minute."

So, being no sailor, as we have seen, and lacking knowledge of sea-anchors and such, he laid in the double-ended paddle, and waited apprehensively for what might

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befall. And at daylight, the gale dying in a cold, clear sky, the son of the head man of the village found him washed up on the beach, more dead than alive, and took him into his abode. And Slimy, who had waited for definite information concerning him, fearing a trap, felt much relieved. And that very night, while Warren raved in delirium, Slimy acted—and sorrow came upon the village, but most heavily upon the head man's son.

THE flotsam of the earth are generally blessed—or cursed—with strong constitutions. Where a useful man would die they flourish—after the fashion of the vegetable world; and Warren woke to consciousness behind the comfortable, if odoriferous, skin walls that sheltered him thirty-six hours after he had been taken there. For a time he puzzled about his surroundings—it was quite dark, and the skins trembled to a whimpering wind. Then he remembered, and shouted in a cracked voice.

A grief-stricken youth—his host—came and ministered to him: the uncertain light of a seal-oil lamp showing him, dejected, bewildered, like a dog betrayed, with yet an uncertain hope in the frightened glances he gave the man whose life he had saved. And Warren ate and drank, giving no thanks, as if, indeed, to feed him were a privilege. Then he went to sleep again, and when he awoke he showed no effect of his adventure.

But the village assailed him—and hard looks were not unmixed with noisy grief, since they of course thought that Slimy and Warren were brothers. But his lack of understanding was too palpable—his innocence was too genuine for a confederate—and so the son of the head man poured out his tale, a wailing chorus accompanying him. Slimy had gone; taking with him the two prettiest girls in the village, three dogs, much food, nearly all the tobacco and a sled.

It had been said of him that, as a boy, he practised picking pockets on ticklish people—this last exploit made one believe it. And for several reasons no pursuit had been made: a new fall of snow had covered his tracks before his going was discovered; the villagers—the dwellers in lonely seacoast spots are not often warriors—were afraid of the white men's world where he had gone, and they did not know what part of it he had gone to; but, most important of all, they had waited for the help of the white man—who knew so much—whom they had brought back to life.

They had talked much, and all their poor logic had said that effort would be wasted without Warren's help. And, since they had saved his life, he would be glad to help. Surely he would help—not only by telling them where Slimy had gone, but by following him to the white men's camp where the natives would be practically helpless. All this before they were sure he had nothing to do with the abduction. In their simple finances, gratitude paid large dividends. And had not Nit-ah-sak pulled him out of the sea?

Nit-ah-sak would only have to tell the white man that one of the girls was his sister, and that the other was soon to be his wife, to have all his aid and sympathy. This Nit-ah-sak proceeded to tearfully do. Then they all crowded 'round. Pathetically they spoke of the dwindling number of the tribe; pathetically they pleaded—for even the stoutest faith needs crutches—offering Warren presents from their scanty possessions; and loudly they spoke of his strength, his courage and his gratitude.

And Warren was furious. He clenched his fists and swore—raving of what he would do to Slimy when he got him. And the natives listened—guessing at his language from his gestures—with the simple faith of little children. But the reason for Warren's anger was a very different one from the reason for the grief of Nit-ah-sak.

For Warren had long ago forgotten the sense of gratitude, and sympathy was an alien feeling also. The sorrow of the poor, kindly creatures on that barren beach was nothing to him. His heart was not touched by their trust in him, nor by their pride in their few and simple possessions—now so freely offered to him. That Slimy had stolen two young girls in order to make some dirty dollars by selling them to a hideous trade in a lawless mining-camp, disturbed him not at all. That the two girls would be the slaves of some "madame," and in the end die of a loathsome disease, made no impression upon Warren. It affected him no more than did the grief of Nit-ah-sak, who had saved his life.

He cursed Slimy horribly—because

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Slimy had taken advantage of his unconsciousness. Slimy should have waited, and taken him in on the steal. Instead, he had played him a dirty trick—slinking away. A decent man, raved Warren, would have gone fifty-fifty on the money obtained from the sale of the girls. He was outraged. Slimy was a cur, a swine—all sorts of things. And he must have known, too, how badly Warren needed the money.

He knew that Warren was broke, all right—that he had recently just saved his neck by disgorging the proceeds of his manipulation of crooked dice—and his persecutors had even taken the dice, and all his other money, too—and hastily leaving a camp visibly annoyed by his visit. What sort of a way was that to treat a man? He addressed the firmament—referring to both Slimy and the near-lynchers, but more particularly to Slimy. Yes—broke. And Slimy must have known it. Would he have gone chasing a sea-otter if he had not been broke? He indulged in an interlude of unkind remarks concerning sea-otters.

The natives watched and listened adoringly. Of his many words, they understood "damn" and a term of ancestral reproach; consequently, his eloquence moved them. It was obvious that he felt about Slimy just as they felt about Slimy. Which was good. Slimy would be brought to book for his act.

The poor devils had still four dogs, of an indifferent quality, with the usual native sled and harness. These they pressed upon Warren, as if he had been their stainless knight, going to revenge and rescue betrayed virginity. And Warren had more than a shrewd notion as to where Slimy had gone, for he himself had sold more than one Indian girl into slavery; and he also felt fairly sure about who would give Slimy the money—the money he meant to take away from Slimy.

In his favor was the time of the year. Even if there had been enough snow to cover, the trails would not be packed as they would be in a few weeks; and hampered by his unhappy passengers and poor team, Slimy could not have traveled fast; and he would never expect Warren to be able to travel so soon—for, of course, he would know how Warren would feel about the transaction. So, taking it altogether, the indignant gentleman he had left behind had an excellent chance of finding Slimy before he got clear.

Anxious fingers packed the sled with the best that poverty could provide; the dogs were harnessed; Nit-ah-sak, who had of course been elected to the honor of going, cracked his whip, and an emotional tribe watched the departure.

As they topped a short rise, the Englishman looked back and grinned sardonically. On a shelf of beach, the little community braved life, the few huts telling their story eloquently. Here and there, driftwood added to stoutness and decoration, but in the main the smoke of the cooking went up from even greater simplicity, under the unwearied scrutiny of various totem-poles. A few—very few—children played in a subdued manner, and the old folk wondered at the coming dark—easing their toothless gums on bits of tobacco, when they were sufficiently lucky to have it.

Hemmed in by an unscalable wall of ignorance and superstition, they lived and died—every little life the center of a cosmos in which it groped, terrified whenever it contemplated its immensity—ruled almost entirely by the changing seasons. Thanks to the good offices of their totem, the twisting devils of the world only gave them the normal amount of trouble. But even the sea threatened, and boasted of its evil deeds.

And Warren laughed. How easy it all was. Why, when he got rid of Nit-ah-sak, and had forced Slimy to disgorge, he could sell the dogs and the sled—not that they were worth so very much; or else he could keep them, as the nucleus of what might, with luck, grow into a decent team. He felt like the prospective owner of an automobile would, in a city today. And if luck kept up, he might strike it rich, and . . . But his dream took an unpleasant turn. A face looked at him out of the past, and laughter left him. Then he strode after the sled.

THE occasional rare beauty of Indian girls is not so well known as some other Alaskan features; and the stealing of them in those old, lawless days is a subject almost forgotten. You may even find old-timers who will tell you that such things were not done—except when marriage was intended. But they might say that even if they knew better; for those who have struck it rich feel bound to record a claim on the new strike of Respectability, and their wives would

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often plead ignorance of the taste of pork and beans. For the unwritten history of the North is yet to come a Rabelais.

But Warren was not interested in respectability—his claim on that creek had long ago been jumped—and he was only concerned about the whereabouts of Slimy Jones. What if Slimy had made extra good time, done his business, and ducked? That would leave Warren penniless in a camp where no man wanted him—penniless, except for the dogs of Nit-ah-sak. And he might have trouble raising money on them: because all who knew him—and all did—would doubt the clarity of his title!

His fear of the possible speed of Slimy stirred in him a form of nervous irritation which manifested itself as energy. Speed. Speed. To his reverential companion he continually indicated the need of haste—regretting the team was too weak to allow of his riding in the sled. And it was surely beneath his dignity to plunge into the travail of breaking trail; besides, Nit-ah-sak was the younger man, and willing; and Warren felt justified in believing that it would be a poor lover and brother who would hesitate at taking upon himself all the work that had to be done toward the ultimate rescue of the sister and sweetheart.

Yet Warren's wasn't a poor intelligence, and at night by the fire he more than once caught himself thinking unusual thoughts, when long dead ancestors stirred within him. And, sometimes, through the clear, calm air, the stars—so many, and so seemingly close—stared at him with an appraising and disconcerting scrutiny. He became fanciful—the loneliness, the eternity of white, the silence: all prodding a sphacelus conscience into uneasy stirrings.

And in contrast to the faith brimming over the soul-windows of Nit-ah-sak, he saw the thorough understanding in the reproachful eyes of the dogs. Small wonder that Nit-ah-sak felt that one to be respected as a god was not necessarily a cheerful traveling companion. So Warren was driven to seek relief in his plannings. And presently the prospective pleasure of robbing Slimy charmed his mind back to its normal state of rottenness. The undertaking again became legitimate business, and the faint call of decency went like a sound in the night from a partly wakened sleeper.

So, and a more cheerful Warren once again delighting Nit-ah-sak with occasional speech. And Slimy, as Warren had guessed, had not gone far. To get rid of his merchandise as soon as possible was safest, even if it meant smaller profit. What ephemeral growth of evil he had decided upon for his market is of no importance. It had sprung up, as such places all spring up, in tents and shacks, almost before the claims of the new strike had been reported.

Like vultures, the vendors of cheap whisky had flocked in the wake of stressful toil—wringing the dust from the miners with an ease inversely proportionate to that with which the miners washed it from the creek—and with the saloon-keeper came the dance-hall proprietor and the gambler, and—the oldest evil.

But the lights of the place held an early evening welcome belying its character, when Warren and Nit-ah-sak made camp in sight of them. For Warren was to go in alone—such was the plan agreed upon—get the girls, and bring them back to the sled. Then—home, the village by the barren sea. They had not had an easy trip, and there was pleasure in its ending. And Nit-ah-sak showed no doubt. But even that poor soul, darkened and weighed upon by its life, the long nights, the struggle for existence—out of which the heavy hand of the world had done its best to wring all emotion, as water is squeezed from a sponge—showed a pitiful eagerness for success.

Amid his squalor and ignorance burned the fitful yet eternal flame by which every life is singed, and which has scorched all the pages of the history of the race—the flame biologists call sex interest and poets call love. And he poured upon Warren a farewell pregnant with hope, then slunk back to his crowding over the camp-fire. And Warren, moving slowly toward the lights, arranged his problem.

To find Slimy. Easy—if he was where Warren felt he was. To bluff him, or force him to divide, or, if chance offered, to get every cent he had been paid for the girls. It might be a hundred dollars—for Slimy was a poor business man. If Warren had done the job, it would have brought more—much more. But Slimy was a poor thing. Then—Slimy having been disposed of—remained Nit-ah-sak and the dogs.

Ah—the camp might be no place for Warren to linger, after dispossessing Slimy.

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So—to tell Nit-ah-sak that the girls had been taken to another camp—they had grub enough—and once off the trail, well, there would be no Nit-ah-sak—only Warren, and the outfit. It was beautifully simple. Perfectly logical—survival of the fittest. Nit-ah-sak would never suspect. It was too easy. Indeed, it was an affair entirely after Warren's heart.

The noise of the unhappy dance-hall piano came to the man, and he paused. With the music, came a vision of the warm saloon, the tempting bottles, the girls in the slim clothing, sitting around after a dance, drinking. He thrilled to the lure of the picture. But he was broke. He grinned unpleasantly. Unless his calculations were unusually wide of the mark, he would not be broke much longer. Then he paused—the thing was rather more involved than it had seemed.

There was little danger of his failing to find Slimy—unless that person had made wonderful time—although he had failed to deduce anything of value from the numerous trails leading to the camp. But after he had found Slimy, and success was his—then began complications. Again, even if Slimy agreed to peaceable division, which was unlikely, there still remained Nit-ah-sak—and to take Nit-ah-sak out into the loneliness and murder him, afterward selling the dogs, meant more time away from the picture of the warm saloon, and women's warm arms.

Like every criminal, he was troubled by the pleasure awaiting the spending of the spoil—the desire to be spending it made the toil of getting it seem the harder and more exasperating. Besides, this might be his lucky night—he did love to play the "wheel." —— Nit-ah-sak. He must get himself in hand. His drinking was becoming illogical. And suppose the —— Indian came into camp, making inquiries and spreading the tale. It was such a petty crime: a hundred dollars in it.

If he had robbed a bank, he wouldn't have minded the whole camp knowing it. But if Nit-ah-sak came in to look for him, it would mean all sorts of trouble. Of course he should have left the Indian at his village. But would they have stood for that? The many annoyances loomed largely, but he gave no thought to the grief of the girls or the agony of Nit-ah-sak.

ONE could hardly talk about side streets or back ways when speaking of that camp—it seemed to have spread out dumbly, like some new-born monstrosity flung upon an inhospitable environment—yet Warren slunk along, trying to avoid places where any one might be—a needless precaution, because the night-life of the camp had called every man to wallow in his pet vice. This with due apology to those gentlemen who depict "the virile pleasures of men who live close to nature," for the benefit of the receptive minds of young girls, and others of equal intelligence.

Now, the individual whose underworld activities were masked by certain legitimate enterprises had an office on Main Street. Under that office was a cellar—which some years after the events herein related formed the nucleus of one of the most sensational stories that ever came out of Alaska—known only to certain of this individual's trusted hirelings.

This person was known as Mr. Sunday, and he had other offices in almost every town in Alaska, where some agent did business in his stead; but for some reason known to the N. W. M. P. he fought shy of Y. T. and all British territory. Many years earlier he had been the owner of a sailors' boarding-house in South Brooklyn. To Mr. Sunday had Slimy Jones hurried, and he had been lucky enough to find him in his office—taking the two terrified girls to him during the darkness of the preceding night.

There had been a few, hurried, whispered words; a nodding of Sunday's dark, oily head; some stifled wails from the women, and Slimy, with ten dollars in his pocket, had gone to celebrate—leaving the girls to the kind attention of Sunday, who had placed them for safe keeping in his remarkable cellar, after bidding Slimy to come again the next evening, when the full and proper price would be paid him.

Then the inconsequential, bibulous god of the chances had looked leeringly over his cup, and noted the three villains—Sunday, Slimy and Warren. They amused him, so he shuffled the comings and goings of men and the hours of time, and laughed—for being a god who loves queer and unexpected situations, he had so arranged events that Warren tip-toed to the office door just as Sunday was counting over to

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Slimy the balance of his earnings. Below in the cellar, the sister and sweetheart of Nit-ah-sak shivered, terrified in each other's arms.

Warren knocked—knocked loudly, for in action he was a truculent ruffian of the direct, fighting type, the reverse of the mood of his cogitation; and at the knock Sunday and Slimy looked at each other apprehensively. Then they grinned—for what need was there for apprehension?

Sunday made a gesture, and Slimy pocketed his pay. Then both men turned their faces comfortably to the door—the kerosene lamp showing every line of them—and Sunday called—

"Come in."

Then Warren pushed open the door and entered, his revolver in his hand, covering Slimy, but apparently—with that uncanny way of guns—covering Sunday also.

"What the ——," began the outraged Sunday, but Warren significantly silenced him.

"So," snarled Warren, showing his teeth at the very much frightened Slimy, who was never a fighting man, "you thought you'd beat me to it, eh? Thought you'd get away with the girls, and get out of the way without me knowing it? How much did you pay him, Sunday?"

"Eighty dollars," replied Sunday sullenly.

"Hell—eighty dollars! Might have known it. The girls are worth more—even if eighty dollars is a lot to a man when he's broke. And there wasn't anything else worth picking up in the whole village. But Slimy's bringing the girls here got me a sled and grub to come along. Now, Slimy, I want that eighty dollars, and from you, Sunday, I want a decent price for the cattle. Call this a hold-up, if you want—but you daren't holler. I know the girls are in the cellar. But I'll be good-natured—Slimy can keep twenty.

"Cough up sixty dollars, Slimy. And you, Sunday—I'll let you off easy—you give me five hundred. Slimy, you're not only a poor thief, but a small one. ——, fancy going to all that trouble and risk for eighty dollars—you know he'll get over a hundred a piece for them. Come on, Slimy—cough up. Come on, Sunday!"

The trembling Slimy obeyed—putting the money on the table and pushing it toward Warren; but Sunday was made of somewhat sterner stuff, and he hesitated, waiting for some opportunity to turn up to help him. But nothing comforting happened.

"Come on," said Warren ominously. "Put the five hundred on the table. Come on."

The Jew glared helplessly. To call for help would be to advertise the contents of his cellar. The miners, for many reasons, had no cause to love him, and while the women were only Indian women, they were women, and Sunday rightly guessed that Warren would only have to suggest hanging to bring about a very joyous lynching party. He was helpless, and Warren, blackguard that he was, could easily adopt the rôle of chivalrous rescuer, proving his case by the fact of his only just having come into camp.

Yes, Sunday was impotent, rage as he might, and he knew it. For Warren did not even need his gun—all he had to do was to threaten to open the door, and shout. And he was no Slimy to be satisfied with a paltry eighty dollars.

"If you don't get a move on, I'll make it a thousand," growled Warren.

Sunday sighed, and reached for his pocket.

"No tricks!"

"I ain't gotta gun."

"Well, I've got the drop, if you have."

But Sunday had no gun—he never carried one—and sighing again, he drew out his wallet, opened it and counted out five hundred dollars in bills; laying them down alongside those disgorged by Slimy. Warren grinned cheerfully, reached to gather in the money, and then an extraordinary thing occurred.

The lamp was directly over the table, throwing it into sharp relief against the shadowy remainder of the room. On the table, in addition to the money, was a jumble of miscellaneous articles, such as will collect on the desk of a not overly-tidy person. And as Warren reached for the money, it seemed that the lamplight was there for no other purpose than that of illuminating the faces of the three men, in order to betray their conflicting passions. From the beginning of time cause and effect had worked, either blindly or purposely, toward that moment.

Each man was a distillate of the desires of all his ancestors, and one could almost

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have limned those ancestors by a single glance at either of the three faces. The weakly degenerate, Slimy, the Hebrew Sunday, the still handsome but dissipated face of the fighting Englishman. For just a second they hung there under the spell of the money—the nearly tearful Slimy, the raging Sunday, the greedily triumphant Warren. Then came that extraordinary change, which made the happening.

WARREN'S hand was closing on the bills. He leered horribly at Slimy, then turned to look at Sunday. His casual glance noted the collection of trivial articles. He hesitated. Then he looked again—carefully. And suddenly all the triumph, all the cunning, almost all the evil went from his face. He was another Warren. He grew deadly pale; and his enemies, quick to scent the change in him, moved to take advantage of it. But his next act rendered both speechless and inactive.

For he apparently forgot all about the money—forgot everything but a button lying among the miscellaneous collection: a somewhat tarnished button—God only knows how it came there—that had once belonged to the mess jacket of an officer in a very famous English regiment. With a curious reverential tenderness, Warren picked up the button. Trembling, he examined it; and swept away upon a flood of memories he forgot all about his surroundings.

Sunday and Slimy looked at one another. What did this mean? Was it a trick of some sort? Then Sunday telegraphed with his eyes to Slimy, trying to tell him to get out his revolver, and began to move a very cautious hand toward the roll of bills. In another moment he would have grasped them; but a sudden groan from Warren halted him. There passed a few seconds, and then Warren, shivering as if from the shock of icy water, dropped the button as if it were red hot, and stiffened into attention.

Slimy hastily withdrew his hand from his hip, and with equal celerity Sunday ceased to go after the money. And then to the utter astonishment of the lesser crooks, Warren fumbled in an inner pocket, pulled out a monocle, fixed it in his left eye, and surveyed them coldly.

"Nearly did a rotten thing—what?" he remarked—apparently to the button.

There was no answer.

"The girls are in the cellar?" he spoke to Sunday, and Sunday, trying to moisten a dry mouth, muttered with feeble defiance.

"Wot of it?"

"Only that I want them," replied Warren quietly.

"You do, eh?" flashed Sunday, his courage partially returned. "Well, you ain't going to get 'em."

"Oh, yes I am," said Warren, almost gently, outstaring Sunday with his monocle.

He walked across the room, stooped, pulled aside a rug and lifted the cellar door. Then he motioned to Slimy.

"Go down, and bring them up," he commanded.

Slimy looked desperately at Sunday, and obeyed slowly.

"What the ——," began the Jew, without moving from the table. "Say, Warren, what's got into you? You've got the money—here it is. Now what are you making a fuss about?"

"Don't offer me your dirty money," said Warren sharply.

The change in the man was baffling. Sunday neither understood nor appreciated the cause. All that he could imagine was that Warren intended to betray him—to show the girls in camp and start trouble. Like a cornered rat, he showed his teeth. A vision of being hanged made him careless of the present. He grinned cunningly, and stood up.

"Oh, have it your own way, then," he said.

"I intend to," answered Warren, turning carelessly toward the cellar door.

Then Sunday acted. Snatching at a heavy paper-weight, he aimed a blow with all his strength at the back of Warren's head. But the latter turned with uncanny rapidity, dodged expertly, and the blow merely grazed his shoulder. Then, before the Jew could recover himself, Warren brought the butt of his revolver heavily down on his skull, and Sunday fell, an inert mass.

"The devil," breathed Warren, examining him, "I didn't mean to kill him."

Something whistled past his ear, and the crash of Slimy's revolver came at the same instant; and Warren, intending to kill this time, put a bullet neatly into the other's head where it just showed above the cellar door, before Slimy could again pull the trigger. It had all happened so

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quickly that Warren—accustomed as he was to sudden death—was dazed. But he soon recovered. He got to his feet, and listened. There was no sound. Even the girls in the cellar were quiet. Apparently no one had heard the shots.

Warren stirred into activity. He went down the cellar steps, untied the girls, helped them into the office, covered them with the coats of the dead men, blew out the light, opened the door, whispered to the girls to be very quiet, and began to hurry them to where Nit-ah-sak waited with the sled—leaving behind on the table a comfortable sum of money—besides what was in Sunday's pocketbook—and a button which had once belonged to the mess jacket of an officer in a certain British regiment.

There followed a welcome of savage delight, and a gratitude expressed by an adulation which Warren hardly noticed. Beyond emphasizing the need of haste, he appeared to have no interest in what came. And the Indians seemed to understand his mood; not that they would have allowed him to do any work, in any event, if they could have prevented it, for he was as sacred to them as any medicine-man, as potent as any totem.

They harnessed up, and started along the trail—the confinement in the cellar not having apparently affected the girls—helping the dogs all they could. But by morning they were bucking such a blizzard that they were compelled to make camp. And Warren was still thoughtful, still indifferent to the daily things. The snow would wipe out their trail while delaying them; thus hardly affecting the chances of pursuit, if pursuit there was. The murder in the office would be clear enough, but the leaving of the money would be a puzzle.

Not that Warren troubled about this—his mind was not in Alaska at all—but the girls and Nit-ah-sak—to whom they had told all they knew of the happenings in the office—speculated uneasily. As a matter of fact, the calibers of the revolvers of both Warren and Slimy were the same, and, Slimy's bullet not being found, the camp solved the puzzle by a verdict of murder and suicide—Slimy having killed Sunday and then shot himself. And no one was greatly upset—not even to the extent of cutting wooden grave-stones.

The blizzard lasted three days, and thereafter the going was good for a day and a half, when another blizzard held them up for five whole days. Another day's labored travel, with the heart-breaking work of making trail in the deep snow, and there began that series of blizzards, still remembered, which made travel impossible in that part of Alaska.

It was a situation that required thoughtful facing. They could not go back, or try for another camp—either suggestion was vetoed at once. So there was but one thing to do, and that was to cut the meals to the vanishing point, try for game as they went along, and head for the village by the sea.

BUT they saw no game, and, hardy as they all were, the strain told on them terribly. When they saw it was necessary to reduce their rations, they of course killed the dogs; and on that poor flesh they subsisted for several days. Then one night after the apology for an evening meal, Warren lay for a long time, thinking. He calculated the distance to the village and the amount of grub remaining—the sled having been abandoned, the latter was made up into two packs, which they carried in turns—and when he measured out breakfast next morning, he cleverly put his share back into the pack without his companions being aware of what he did.

They were about four days from the village—if they were able to travel on those four days, which was doubtful, judging by the appearance of the sky—and he had calculated that if the food was very sparingly divided between three people those three had just the barest chance of reaching their destination. To feed a fourth person would mean certain death to all of them. One must, therefore, drop out and die, in order that the other three might have a chance for life.

When at midday that day they began to look inquiringly at him, Warren told them that there would be no meal until camp was made for the night. They struggled on till about half an hour before dark, when Warren called a halt, and startled his adoring friends by telling them he was going no farther.

"I have left my business," he said, "to see you thus far in safety. Now I must leave you. If you are very careful, you have a little food for four days. As you

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know, the village is four sleeps away. If storms come, don't eat. Eat only when you can travel. Some time in the future—" he lied gallantly—"if the gods are good I will see you again."

They begged him to remain with them—telling him that he was their brother and their father; and in the tired, shy eyes of the sister of Nit-ah-sak was more than the love of relationship. But to all their pleading Warren was obdurate. Then the practical Nit-ah-sak asked him what he would do for grub, begging him to take his share out of what remained, or more, if he required more to take him to where he was going; for the real reason for Warren's leaving them never entered Nit-ah-sak's head—if it had, he would have stayed with Warren until Warren would have been forced to continue with them.

Then Warren again lied, as a gentleman should lie.

"Do you think I am mad," he said, "to try to travel without grub? I know where I am, and not far away is a cache I made before I came to your village. There is only enough food there to take me to where I want to go. If I had more, I would give you some."

They again began to plead with him to stay, until to clinch things he had to pretend to be angry at their slowness in obeying him—bidding them hurry. So they pleaded no more—taking leave of him with all the affection and respect of which their natures were capable, hanging long on the parting, until he again bade them begone. Then Nit-ah-sak motioned the women to go, took Warren's pack, and looked at him silently for some minutes. Then, without a word, he went—traveling slowly along the snow, a woman on either side, toward the sunset of the short day.

And Warren watched—waving his hand to them when they looked back—until the darkness fell, and he was alone. Very much alone. But he had not far to go, and he smiled as he faced it—feeling happier than he had felt for many years: strangely happy.

And it was a very simple matter. To travel till he fell from exhaustion might be spectacular, but foolish. Not for Warren the useless struggle to nowhere; the last mile on delirious hands and knees. Not for him such a fear-driven finish. No. Very carefully he filled his pipe with the last of his tobacco and made a bed in the snow, covering himself completely, except for his face, where the pipe glowed.

And it was not unpleasant. For one thing, he was very tired and weak—so tired that presently the pipe was forgotten, and fell. The stars had all come out, and he was sure that their scrutiny was a friendly one. And the night was no longer cold. Very cosy it was in this soft, warm bed. Soft, warm bed, with the bright, kindly eyes of the stars watching him go to sleep.

Many years of his life slipped away from him, like a bad dream of no importance, leaving only the suggestion of the white bed, and the kindly eyes.

And it was very quiet. Some one had come into the room a moment ago, and the sweet voice belonging to the kind eyes had whispered—

"Hush, dear, he's asleep."

Of course, he wasn't asleep, but they thought he was, and it was great fun to pretend. From somewhere in the house came the melody of the tune he liked so well—soothingly. And, they had put out the light. Yes, it was snowing outside, because tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and there was always snow on the ground on Christmas—the Christmas cards said so.

Something cool and soft brushed his lips tenderly. It was too dark to see what it was. If he had been outside it would have been a snow-flake. He smiled. He must have been really asleep, not to know her good-night kiss.

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THE DIVINING ROD AT GRIZZLY

by

ROBERT J. PEARSALL

Author of "Square," "Forty-Nine," etc.

JOE MANNING, express agent, depot master, and general factotum of the little railroad terminus called Grizzly, penciled the message just ticked down to him from the Big Boulder mine, the while a frown slowly gathered on his usually good-natured face. Still frowning disappointedly, he slid off his stool, glanced at the clock, waited meticulously until hour and minute hand formed a straight line, then left the office and started down the track toward the misnamed Rusty Spoon, Grizzly's one public eating-place.

Dusk was settling upon the sleepy little town, the blistering, shingle-warping heat of the day was past, to the west the untamed and mostly unexplored hills were purple and crimson and gold. Along the opposite side of the street, before the few business places of Grizzly, half the population loafed. Manning caught sight of the keeper of the livery stable sprawling in his chair, and called out to him—

"Can't use that rig tonight, Jackson."

"Eh? What? Why not?"

But Joe had bit his lips immediately after speaking, and walked on without replying. A tall, lank man, dressed in a suit of rusty black, had sauntered out of Jebson's grocery, and stood looking after Manning with a pleased but malevolent grin on his shrewd face. It was Featherbridge, dealer in real estate and insurance, and Joe's rival in love. Grizzly gossip had it that there was another and unknown cause for enmity between them, for the two had never spoken since Manning's return from Sacramento a year ago, when his father had died in unanticipated bankruptcy.

"Confound it," grunted Joe, "he heard that."

Quickening his steps a little as if under the impulse of anger, he passed a ramshackle vacant house, and came to the Rusty Spoon. This was an unpainted, one-story-and-attic structure, in which a not altogether soulless corporation had some time back installed old man Shannon, a crippled and superannuated switchman. For his virtues, Shannon had been blessed with a daughter who helped him run the place—"Molly, Saint of the Coffee Cup," a passing traveler had dubbed her—and a pleasing vision of winsome young womanhood industriously polishing glassware greeted Manning as he entered.

"'Lo, Molly!"

"'Lo, Joe."

Something more than friendship brightened Joe's face and warmed and deepened his voice, and one might have thought an answer to it showed in Molly's clear eyes. She left her work, came forward, and primly awaited his order.

"Nothing now, Molly. Got to go back. Say, Molly, I just got some bad news for myself."

His face was so doleful that Molly's unconsciously registered sympathy in spite of her pretended lightness of tone.

"'Tis a pity, whatever it is."

"It's that, all right. That gold shipment from the Big Boulder's coming down

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tonight instead of tomorrow. I clear forgot about tomorrow being a holiday. So that dance tonight—I can't take you to it."

"Faith, you frightened me. I thought 'twas something important."

"So you may say," gloomed Joe. "Now I suppose he'll ask you."

"Who?" feigning lack of understanding.

"Oh, that clever gazabo! Featherbridge!"

There was more animosity in Joe's voice than even a rivalry in love seemed to justify.

"Well, why should he not?"

"You won't go with him?" pleaded Manning.

"Listen to the selfish man," parried Molly, "and not another ball in a month. And why shouldn't I go with Mr. Featherbridge?"

"Because—" began Joe, harshly.

Anger, hatred even, gleamed in his eyes; he was plainly on the brink of a revelation, and Molly's lips parted anticipatively. Her one score against Joe Manning was the unconcealed and bitter antagonism he had displayed from the first toward her other principal suitor, and she wanted it explained. But Joe checked himself, seemed to choke something back, and his voice changed to a pleading note.

"Because—oh, because I'm asking you, Molly."

"As if that was a reason," she mocked with instant lightness.

"Isn't it?" Suddenly Manning's face lightened as with a great inner flame. "Isn't it, Molly? I——"

He reached for her hand. But as their fingers touched a cup was knocked from the counter and fell with a crash to the floor. Molly stooped to pick up the pieces. From this strategic position her voice came swiftly and a little brokenly.

"I—I don't care so much about the dance, Joe. But I—there's no place else to go. I shouldn't think you'd want——"

"Molly—" and there was the timidity born of over-eagerness in Manning's voice—"come over and help me watch those infernal gold bars. Will you? For just a little while."

"The conceit of you." Molly popped up from behind the counter. "What makes you think—but yes. For a very little while. Now go."

Her quick ear had caught footsteps, and Manning turned just as Featherbridge, alert to take advantage of what he had overheard, entered the door. Obediently Manning abandoned the field to his rival, but could not resist giving Molly's hand a farewell touch as he passed out; so in relation to paradise, entrance and exit of the two men were quite reversed. Manning had just received the most signal mark of favor yet vouchsafed him, while the tableau of which Featherbridge had caught a glimpse was most displeasing.

FEATHERBRIDGE'S usual manner was a mixture of pomposity and oily suavity, a combination which had helped materially in building up the reputation for acumen he enjoyed among the residents of Grizzly. Also, there was the fact that he was the only man in town who managed to exist and prosper without apparent labor—clearly added evidence of superiority.

Since his real estate deals had been mainly confined to selling town lots and mining stock to unsophisticated outsiders sent him by a San Francisco agency, he had created few local enmities. Public opinion, therefore, lay all with him in his competition with Manning for Molly's regard; bets had even been laid on the outcome, at three to one; but Featherbridge's backers would have found small comfort in the interview that followed.

For, by reason of aforesaid tableau, the devil of ill-temper was on Featherbridge; and Molly's side of their conversation indicated that she was not the girl to be appoached in such a mood.

"I've an engagement for the evening, thank you kindly."

"Yes, you've heard right. 'Tis not to go to the dance."

"And why should it not be with Mr. Manning? Sure, 'tis not his fault the gold came down today."

"Yes, if you must know, I'm aimin' to keep him company a while."

"'Twill not look well, you say, Mr. Featherbridge! 'Twill not look well! Suppose you say that to me father."

Featherbridge had for perhaps a month been finding his way with Molly increasingly difficult, an inexplicable condition of things to a man of his character. Consider the match he was as compared with the penniless and low-salaried express agent!

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His feeling had already passed from incredulity to hurt and resentful egotism, and during the snappy progress of the quarrel that followed Molly's last remark, it turned into a torturing sort of rage. When he came out of the restaurant he was ripe for most any kind of safe mischief.

"The vixen! —— her!"

Dusk was passing into darkness. A few street lights dotted satirically christened Broadway, and between the lamp and the window of the express office Featherbridge saw Manning's figure silhouetted. And he shot it a glance of venomous hatred.

"By ——, he'll never have her."

He walked on toward the express office, emotion bubbling over into muttered words.

"Wish I could hit him harder than I have. Wish I could take his job away from him. Wish I could——"

In the midst of these generous thoughts he saw Manning take up his double-barreled, sawed-off shotgun, a murderous weapon, and begin cleaning it. That made him think of the gold, some fifteen thousand dollars' worth, that would presently come rolling down on a hand-car, the weekly shipment from the Big Boulder. It made him think with increased anger of Molly's tryst with Manning, guarding it. And then his flaming desire to worse than ruin Joe Manning crystallized, and he stopped suddenly, dead in his tracks.

It was a full-fledged inspiration that had come to him.

He stood for a moment considering it, his long fingers curving like the talons of a hawk, his eyes narrowing, his face working craftily. He was too clever to do without the niceties of calculation. He prided himself on working out every chance and every detail, and in this case he realized he still had some thinking to do; but the broad outlines of the soul-satisfying scheme to toboggan his rival penitentiaryward were his at once.

He smacked his lips over the prospect.

"And there should be money in it, too. They'll offer a reward. At least a thousand. And with him out of the way, then Molly——"

Oh, he was a clever man!

And in the meantime, while Featherbridge betook himself through Grizzly homeward, bowing in dignified fashion to those he met, Joe Manning, inside the express office, felt his exuberance of spirit die away into slack-nerved indecision. The pinions of his fancy, unfurled in a dream of love, broke themselves against the hard wall of fact, the fact of poverty. What had he to offer Molly? A miserly salaried job, a home in the womanless desolation of Grizzly.

Curiously enough, when Manning thought of this, a curse came to his lips against Featherbridge. Why? Featherbridge had been the partner of Joe's father in the joint deal that had ruined the latter, the purchase of the worthless Lone Tree mine. But surely, as partner, Featherbridge had also lost heavily. Indeed, he was reputed to have lost more than old man Manning. No; in this respect, at least, Joe's antagonism to Featherbridge was clearly illogical.

THE next morning, on the one train that daily left Grizzly, Featherbridge made a trip to the city. Nothing was thought of that, nor would anything have been learned as to his errand, had he not taken into his confidence, on his return, one of the most talkative men in Grizzly.

"You see, I've been working on something a long time," he said to Jebson the grocer, "and I needed some chemicals to try my idea out. I don't mind telling you in secret what it was—in secret, mind you. It's a divining-rod. Sure there's something in it, bound to be, with all the stories about them. Where there's so much smoke there's bound to be some fire, says I, so I went ahead and invented one. Only I did it scientific, and not haphazard, like the rest."

"Eh! It works?" cried Jebson, his wrinkled old face alive with interest.

"Sure," said Featherbridge, complacently. "It was just a matter of reasoning power and experiments. Everything attracts something else, doesn't it? There isn't anything in nature that ain't got its affinity. Mercury is gold's affinity, or they wouldn't amalgamate, and the problem was to increase that affinity or attraction up to where it would work across space. Well, I've done it. Look here."

They were standing in the rear of Jebson's store. With a cautious look around, Featherbridge drew from his pocket a short stick cut from a live oak. One end of the stick was forked; the other, as

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Featherbridge pointed out, had been hollowed and plugged up again. He took a lump of gold quartz from another pocket, placed it on the floor, and backed away from it, holding the forked end of the stick lightly between his flexible palms.

Jebson saw there was no doubt about the thing at all. Plainly the lower, free end of the stick swayed outward, pulling toward the quartz.

"It works the same way with a gold coin," said Featherbridge, and repeated the experiment, while Jebson watched with popping eyes. "It isn't the stick, of course; it's the composition of quicksilver and some other things I've put in the end of it. That composition is the secret. I'm going out in the hills with it tomorrow; and while I'm here I'll lay in an outfit of grub. And that burro of yours—I'll rent him if you let me have him reasonable."

For his purpose, Featherbridge could not have chosen a better confidant. The astonishing news was circulating before Featherbridge had been gone an hour, and within a day every one in Grizzly had heard it. It wasn't strange, considering the primitiveness of the town, that it gained general credence.

A few jeered, Joe Manning especially, but most of the old prospectors had similar corroborative stories to tell, stories that they themselves had been told on unimpeachable authority. Then, too, Featherbridge's reputation had its weight; he wasn't the man to be wasting time and effort. With interest stimulated to fever heat by the lust for the yellow metal, the town impatiently awaited Featherbridge's return.

He came back, indeed, in a few days, with a very large piece of quartz, and displayed great disappointment at finding his secret known. However, the mischief being done, he yielded to popular demand, and gave several public demonstrations of his device, so successfully as to convince almost every one.

"It's a winner. When it acts like this with one piece of quartz," he argued, "what will it do when I find a real mine?"

"It'll probably jump out of his hand and dig for the gold," scoffed Joe Manning, to whom all this was retailed after Featherbridge had departed again.

But inwardly Manning was so bewildered that his derision lost force. He was sure the divining-rod was a fake, used to further some other purpose; but what on earth was that purpose?

Joe now had a clear field at the Rusty Spoon, and seemed to be making the most of it. But in reality, though Molly and he were together almost every evening, the progress of his courtship was as uncertain and halting as though Cupid had been hamstrung. Not that zeal was lacking; but with Joe his very love for Molly made him hesitate, halt on the brink of success, doubting his right to have her, his ability to make her happy.

To marry her was a swelling ambition, the contemplation of which lifted him to the pinnacle of happiness; but thought of the amount of his monthly pay-envelop was enough to bring him down on the run.

To marry her, to take her out of Grizzly to a softer environment, to provide a home for her there, a real home—that would be different. And so little would be required to do that. He was a machinist by trade, having taken his present job only because it was the only niche open in Grizzly, and because he had two reasons for wanting to stay there, one of which was Molly. A few thousand dollars would start him in a shop of his own; after that, all would depend on his own strength. And he had confidence in himself. But those few thousands were lacking.

There was nothing secretive about Joe, and his disgust with his poverty got well bruited through Grizzly. Grizzly also judged pretty well the state of his feelings toward Molly Shannon; and the town was too well versed in human nature to underestimate the strength of such a motive, for good or evil. Consequently there was a touch of seriousness under the jest that began to be passed of how easily Joe might further his fortunes by helping himself to the precious contents of the box weekly shipped down from the Big Boulder.

"Sure!" Joe would say when this solution of his difficulty was suggested. "Wish I could get away with it. You show me a way and we'll split."

Joe had brought back with him from the city a habit of rather reckless talking that Grizzly did not altogether understand.

Suspicion is a weed of rapid growth. Grizzly recollected old man Manning's bankruptcy, by which Joe had lost his

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birthright, and judged not altogether unreasonably that such a thing might well sour and twist a man's character. So, without tangible cause and yet quite naturally, anticipation came upon the mind of the town. And when the thing actually happened, there were many who could shake their heads and say—

"I told you so."

ONE Sunday morning Grizzly awoke to three related pieces of news. During the night the empty shack between the express office and the Rusty Spoon had been burned. The box containing fifteen thousand dollars in gold bars, which Manning was supposed to defend with his life, had been stolen from the express office. And Joe Manning, though in the absence of a relief still performing the duties of express agent, was in custody of the sheriff and charged with the crime.

Curiously stirred, eager and alive with their one touch of excitement in a year, the inhabitants of Grizzly flocked to the express office. Standing in the doorway of the office Joe Manning, looking pale and worried, told to a constantly changing audience his rather unconvincing story, over and over again:

"It was about midnight when it happened. I'd turned the lantern low, as I always do, to keep from being a target. First I noticed things were getting lighter, but I thought it was the moon. Then I heard the crackling of a fire. When I got to the door it looked as if the Rusty Spoon was all ablaze. I—well, you know where Molly and her father sleep, up in those attic rooms. I don't think it was any wonder I clear forgot the gold.

"I got pretty near there before I saw it wasn't the Rusty Spoon that was burning. Then I got a hunch, for the empty house couldn't have fired itself. Some one must have started it—why? When I got back to the office I knew why. The gold was gone, box and all."

Those who heard the story, for the most part, shrugged their shoulders, glanced meaningly at each other, and commented skeptically.

"A pretty fishy yarn."

"He don't even tell it good. He's a poor liar. It don't sound natural. He's holdin' something back."

"Of course, he fired that building himself. It was a smart trick."

"Too bad. I liked him—in a way. A'course, he got them city ideas. The express company'll sure stick it on him."

"There ought to be a reward, hadn't there?"

"There is. Gee whilikins, a big one! Look here."

The speaker drew the attention of the crowd to a notice Manning had just posted on the train bulletin-board, offering a thousand dollars for the arrest of the thief, and a thousand to the finder of the gold. Presumably, the reward had just been wired in from headquarters.

"Lord, it's like a man signing his own death-warrant, Manning posting that. Now, the thief's caught, but the gold——"

The sentence was never finished, nor was it necessary. The crowd caught the suggestion, and a bomb could hardly have scattered it more effectively than that offer of reward. It was patent that if Manning had stolen the gold, he could not have carried it far. For the rest of the day Grizzly was turned into an aggregation of eager-eyed searchers, who ransacked every empty shack in the place and explored every near-by cañon and gully. But by nightfall nothing had been accomplished, save the inevitable birth of an idea.

Featherbridge! They remembered his divining-rod. Surely here was a situation ready-made for its practical trying-out. Some one suggested sending a searching party out for him. Half of Grizzly acclaimed the suggestion, the other and more avaricious half were less enthusiastic; but Featherbridge settled the matter by strolling nonchalantly down-town the next morning.

He had come in late the night before, and had not yet heard of the theft. No one could have been more astonished.

"Now, I didn't think Manning would—" he began with deep regret. "But I won't say that—maybe he didn't. We can't tell till we find the gold, That ought to settle the matter. Why, sure, I can find it if it's anywhere about. Let's go down to the station."

But Featherbridge paltered a little, probably with intent, and by the time he got to the scene of the theft half the population of Grizzly was waiting for him.

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IT IS a hard thing to feel one's self convicted of a felony in the minds of those one has known since boyhood. It is a harder thing to feel the wavering faith of the woman one loves. That Molly doubted him Joe Manning knew from the fact that she had not asked him, in the one short private talk they had had together, to deny his guilt. It was small comfort to know from her haggard face and her strained eyes, tired from sleeplessness, how sorely she was suffering from that doubt and from her knowledge of his peril.

Deadly anger, too, is a soul-disturbing thing, especially when it must be curbed and checked and held from expression. So Manning's face went hard and white at Featherbridge's approach, and those who saw it read in it added evidence of fear and guilt.

"But if Featherbridge does find the gold, how can they prove Manning put it there?" doubted one man.

Molly, who stood at Manning's elbow, shot at that speaker a woman's look of keen dislike. She didn't want it proved.

She refused altogether to look at Featherbridge, and the smirk with which he had started to greet her changed into a scowl. But that scowl passed away as he caught sight of the amount of the reward, and he licked his lips furtively.

"I suppose there'll be no trouble about that," he said to the sheriff with a nod toward the reward notice, "if I find the money."

"Not a bit," said the sheriff, "if you find it."

"And if I get the proof against the thief at the same time," pursued Featherbridge, avidly.

"Well, if it's Manning," bargained the sheriff, a curious note of distaste in his voice, "I claim half."

"That's fair enough," agreed Featherbridge, and put out his hand, but somehow the sheriff failed to see it.

"You might as well start," he said curtly.

"All right," replied Featherbridge.

And, gravely important, he pulled out the forked stick.

The buzzing crowd grew silently attentive. Upon that silence a startling sound broke, the sound of Molly's laughter. Perhaps it was because if she had not laughed she would have screamed instead. But it seemed to frighten Featherbridge, who shot a quick glance at her, and appeared to be relieved when he saw agony instead of humor on her face. Manning found her hand and pressed it, a queer remorse in his eyes, and she grew quiet.

"It isn't around here," said the sheriff, "that's certain."

"Might as well start here, anyway," said Featherbridge. "It will feel that amount of pure gold a long way."

He placed the divining-rod into position between his hands.

Manning's eyes, and indeed the eyes of every one in the crowd, were fixed on him intently. Featherbridge stood still a moment, then walked slowly in front of the door of the express office. Either he feigned bewilderment or felt it. And suddenly every man present was talking to his neighbor, in a strained, incredulous undertone.

It was no wonder, for the free end of the forked stick was twitching like a pointing finger toward the express office.

"The gold can't be in there," cried Featherbridge incredulously to the sheriff.

"It isn't," said the sheriff, with curious positiveness that made Featherbridge look at him again, doubtfully.

But the crowd murmured eagerly and pressed forward, and Featherbridge recovered his assurance, if he had ever lost it.

"The divining-rod can't lie, though," he said, in a puzzled tone that didn't ring quite true. "I don't see——"

"Well, try it out then," said the sheriff, and, strangely enough, there seemed something false and feigned in his tone, too.

But his action was decisive enough. He stepped forward, waved Featherbridge inside the office, pushed Molly and Manning after him, and warned back the rest of the crowd, which bulged wild-eyed through the doorway.

"All right," said the sheriff. "Go ahead!"

Manning looked at him anxiously, warningly, a queer look for a guilty man to give his custodian. But the sheriff's tone was queer, too, hot with hardly repressed anger. Featherbridge glanced furtively at the sheriff; his face twitched, paled; and then he seemed to grip and reassure himself.

Slowly Featherbridge walked across one end of the room, and then diagonally from corner to corner, twice. As he did so, his

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face cleared again, and became full of conviction. It was no wonder, for even the watching front of the crowd could see that wherever he walked the divining-rod swung always, like the needle of a magnet, toward a point just in front of the one window.

"It must be under the floor," murmured Featherbridge, as if to himself.

He moved slowly toward the window. Back through the crowd ran an excited whisper:

"It's here! It was Manning!"

And justified indeed seemed both statements, for the magic rod slowly settled to the perpendicular. The sheriff stepped forward.

"You say—" he began, unsteadily.

"You see what this says," said Featherbridge, indicating the forked stick.

"Humph! No chance of a mistake, I suppose," suggested the sheriff, still with that curious break in his voice, as though he were with difficulty holding it within bounds.

"It's easy enough to find out, isn't it?" replied Featherbridge. "That board looks loose, anyway."

"That's so," said the sheriff, now with something like elation coming into his tone. He stooped swiftly, swiftly inserted his fingers in a crack, and yanked up a short board, the nails of which slipped smoothly from their sockets.

"You see," cried Featherbridge, trying hard not to exult.

And every one there did see. They saw what seemed to them proof positive of Manning's guilt, a small box which the lifted board had hidden, a uniquely shaped box, just such a box as those in which the shipment of gold had always come.

Molly suddenly cried aloud. It was not a cry of horror at Manning's guilt, nor was it a cry of fear or pity for him. It was—for she was a woman—an absolutely illogical cry of conviction of his innocence.

"Joe, you didn't do it, you didn't do it!"

She knew it at last.

"Thank God you believe that," cried Joe, a great light breaking over his face. "No more I didn't."

"You didn't, eh?" rasped Featherbridge, turning suddenly upon him, uglily. "Then how——"

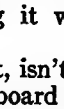
"But this box is empty," said the sheriff quietly, lifting it out of the hole and jerking off the lightly tacked cover.

"Empty!" Featherbridge whirled in consternation.

"Sure," said Manning, dangerously quiet, "what did you expect?"

In the crowd somebody guffawed. "A —— of a sensitive divinin'-rod, that is! Faith, 'twould scent out the empty pockets of me, that had gold in them once."

"Now," said the sheriff, turning on Featherbridge, "you poison-breathed reptile, you infernal liar and thief, Lord keep me from breathing the same air with you long. But just now you're my prisoner, and, lucky for you, under my protection, too. For when it soaks into this crowd what you've tried to do, be sure you'll need protection."



"YOU see, I couldn't tell you," said Manning a little later to a mystified and somewhat resentful Molly Shannon. "I was afraid—well, you've a temper, you know, and you might have given the thing away. But I noticed that loosened board an hour after the reward was posted, and found the gold. And then I fixed the trap up with the sheriff. I suspected Featherbridge right away. A sharp codger he was—so sharp he was bound to cut himself, sooner or later.

"The reward! Well, I get fifteen hundred of it, of course, all for the finding of the gold, and half of what was offered for the arrest of the thief. Which is, all told, about half what Featherbridge gypped father out of, through pretending to buy the Lone Tree mine along with dad, when really he owned the blame hole-in-the-ground himself. So I don't consider it blood-money, but only a kind of unusual form of restitution. I've been waiting a year for a chance to get him on the hip.

"And say, Molly, that fifteen hundred, don't you think it's enough to—to kind of start a—don't you think you and me, Molly——"

"Sure," said Molly, "I think it is."

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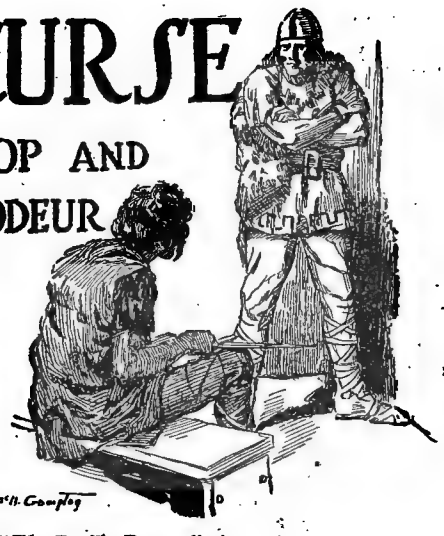
THE FINN'S CURSE

by FARNHAM BISHOP AND ARTHUR GILCHRIST BRODEUR



Authors of "The Pass of Blood," "The Devil's Dagger," etc.

AKHALA, the hunch-backed Finn, sat cross-legged on the floor of his hall, running a hone gently over the edges of the sword upon his knees, and crooning a weird, minor melody the while.

"Connal has not been here three days now," he observed thoughtfully.

The girl beside him shrugged her shoulders indifferently, but her eyes betrayed anxiety and disappointment. She was tall and gracefully rounded, beautiful with the ruddy beauty of her Scottish mother; but with strange, melancholy eyes that reminded one of the eyes of Akhala.

"He would not come while these Norsemen are here," she answered. "Scots and Norwegians have small love for each other."

"Yet he might come, and welcome, for all of them," the old Finn persisted. "Maelbrigh, his father, has kept peace with the Norse out of friendship for me; so why should they harm him?"

The girl's eyes flashed.

"Harm him! They dare not, father. Connal MacMaelbrigh is a match for any Norwegian that ever came from Lochlinn!"

"Well for him if he does not have to put that to the test," Akhala answered. "These Norsemen be fierce, and their fleet is the greatest I have ever seen. I hear steps on the stair, Bethoc; it will be young Sigvald, who leaves our home for the camp this morning. Fetch him wine."

The girl went out by the rear door; but as the outside stairs resounded to the heavy feet of their guest, she thrust in her head again.

"I hate him," she whispered, "that Sigvald. He is an evil man. If Connal were here——"

A hand fumbled at the latch of the outer door, and she disappeared just as Sigvald entered. He was a magnificent young giant, tall, with the neck and shoulders of a mountain bull. Everything about him seemed to project aggressively: his forehead bulged, his chin thrust out, his cheekbones strained at the tight pink skin that covered them. Even his little blue eyes were hard and prominent. He swaggered proudly in his clashing mail and scarlet cloak, thrust out his great chest, and jingled his gold and silver bracelets together as he walked. His hair and mustaches, blond almost to whiteness, were long and bristling.

Sitting down on a bench opposite the cross-legged Finn, the Norseman watched the old man polish the edges of his sword. Akhala seemed somehow to fascinate him, for his eyes played up and down the deformed figure ceaselessly.

"I do not believe you are such a wizard after all," he hazarded. "Wizards do harm to all men; and you do not look as if you had malice enough to hurt a fly. What gave you your ill name for sorcery, Akhala?"

"Fools," the Finn answered quietly. "There is no such thing as wizardry, Chief, nor magic, either. Such things are only

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the fool's way of accounting for the evils he brings upon himself."

"So I thought," Sigvald observed; though in truth he thought nothing of the sort, being full of the superstition universal in the North, which attributes uncanny powers to the old, especially to old Finns.

"What is this I hear of your friendship with the Scots?" he asked suddenly, in a bullying tone. "It is said that you have dealings with Maelbrigh."

"What of it?" the old man retorted, mild surprise in his eyes. "Maelbrigh is no enemy of yours. His clan alone has kept aloof from the war against you."

Sigvald glared at him.

"Listen, old Crook-Back," he threatened. "I know who my enemies are; you do not. If it suits me to make enemies, I make them. I do not choose to have you friendly with the Scots. From this time on, you must never receive a Scot beneath your roof; you must never speak with a Scot, nor allow one of your household to speak or deal with them."

The Finn's skull-like face hardened, obstinately.

"For twenty years I have lived among the Scots," he answered firmly. "Sutherland has been my home; I married a Scottish woman. The clansmen have used me well. Maelbrigh has always been my friend. Now you come, a stranger from across the sea, and bid me cut myself off from them. By what right?"

"By right of conquest, and the king's authority," Sigvald boasted; and it was plain that he was glad of the chance to make the boast. "King Harald has made me Earl of Orkney and Sutherland. You, therefore, are my man, and must obey my command."

Akhala looked his despair. There was no gainsaying the power of Harald Fairhair, King of Norway and conqueror of the Scottish Isles. Having welded together a great kingdom out of a multitude of petty states, having freed the Norwegian people from the bloody tyranny of their greedy rulers, and united them into one strong, aggressive nation, Harald had found himself committed to warfare beyond the seas, and carried it out with relentless energy.

The vikings, pitiless wolves of the sea, longing for the rich spoil of the new kingdom, gathered their fleets from a hundred lesser ventures in France and the British Isles, and burst upon Norway in the Summer of 872. But the wrath of Harald fell upon them bloodily, destroyed thousands, and drove the rest in headlong flight back to their pirate lairs in Scotland. Nor did he stop then, but followed them across the sea with his hundreds of swift galleys; and dividing his fleet into two squadrons, hunted them out systematically.

Guthorm, his uncle, commanding one of the squadrons, swept down on the pirate-ridden Shetlands like a Winter gale, burning, killing, plundering. In one short week every viking lair in the islands had been smelled out and stripped bare. The pirates were not strong enough for resistance, for they never dreamed Harald's men would seek them out across the sea.

A few ships here, a few there, lurking in ambush behind the deeply intersected, cliff-strewn coast, they had waited for the passing of peaceful merchant-ships and fishermen, or sought the craig-girt fastnesses of those wicked waters to divide the spoil.

Then destruction descended upon them. Guthorm, that grim veteran of a score of wars, drew a cordon 'round the islands with his hundred and fifty ships, and methodically combed every bay, every firth, every inlet. Escape there was none; those who fled were speedily overtaken by the swifter, many-oared red long-ships of the king.

Thence Guthorm sailed southwest, fell upon the Orkneys, and repeated his tactics there. His work was harder now, for those islands lie in a mad jumble of bleak, wind-swept rock, fearful channels and deadly tide-rips, treacherous, snarling reefs, and deceptively smooth, evil eddies. In the twelve days of his broken warfare there, he lost seven ships, and nearly as many hundred lives.

Twice only did the vikings make a stand. Both times, there was a brief, sharp struggle —gleaming hordes of mailed king's men climbing over the doomed bulwarks, swords that flashed blue, then red; a savage scurry in the waists, yells of pain; then death and silence. But here, knowing the waters better than their pursuers, those pirates who won free scurried over the hungry Pentland Firth, and found temporary shelter among the wild Gaelic clansmen of Caithness and Sutherland.

And ever Guthorm pursued them. He, too, braved the Firth, sailed west along the coast, and sent his warriors harrying into

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the interior of northern Scotland. All along the shores they raged, shattering and scattering the remnants of the pirates and their Gaelic allies, burning villages and hanging the captured vikings.

STRONGEST and bravest of Guthorm's warriors, most resolute and cunning of his ship-captains, were Rognvald of the Meres and his brother Sigvald. A mere youngster, whose first service under the king's banner had been in the decisive naval battle of Hafrsfjord, Sigvald had won Harald's favor almost at once, and had been appointed to rule over Orkney as soon as Guthorm's fleet should conquer it, and act as vice-regent for the Scottish coast.

Therefore, Akhala was afraid, and with good cause. He had not known of this appointment before; and though he himself had seen the broken forces of the pirates hewn down and their leaders hanged by Guthorm's terrible house-carles, he had never feared for himself till now. Harald was the Great Liberator; Guthorm was as just as he was stern; no peaceful man would suffer wrong from them.

But if Guthorm should sail away, and Sigvald remain behind as earl of the conquered lands, there would be no help for the man who offended the savage young giant. Akhala pondered these things; and, lest his anxiety should show in his face, he bent closer over his work, and plied his hone busily.

The door opened, and the girl Bethoc came in, a silver-banded ox-horn in her hand. Sigvald's bold eyes rested upon her hungrily.

"I have brought the wine, father," she announced.

"Good," answered the Finn. "Give it to our guest, that he may depart from us with a blessing."

Sigvald took the horn, drank, and handed it back to the girl. The strong liquor seemed to give him courage for the purpose in his heart, for his eyes roved from the girl to her father with less hesitancy and more daring. At last he spoke.

"Look you, Akhala," he said. "For three days now I have tarried in your house, ever since the fighting with the pirates ended. I did my share in that fighting; and, as I told you, Guthorm has asked Harald to confirm me as Earl of Orkney and this coast. I shall be rich, and the most powerful man from Shetland to Northumbria. I have cast eyes on your daughter here, and found her fair. Give her to me; I will make you wealthy for it."

Old Akhala turned his gaze full on the Norwegian; and now all gentleness was gone from his eyes. They burned with a fierce, contemptuous light. But his voice was as soft as before.

"I thought," he said, "that Harald was the friend of the weak. I thought he promised justice. Perhaps, though, your meaning is not what I take it to be: perhaps you want me to give you my daughter in marriage."

Sigvald burst into mocking laughter.

"Marriage indeed!" he scoffed. "Since when have the chiefs of the Meres bound themselves in marriage to the children of the Finns? I meant just what you thought, Akhala. As for Harald's justice, that is a long way off. He is in Northumbria, and may never come hither to see what his Earl of Orkney is doing." His face grew fierce. "You would best give her to me, marriage or no marriage," he threatened. "Else it will be ill for you, you heaven-blasted dwarf!"

Bethoc shrank against the wall, her hot cheeks hidden in her hands. Slowly, Akhala rose to his feet, still running his hone along the edge of the sword. Then, like a mountain wild-cat, he flung himself upon the Northman, the sharp blade hissing about his head.

Sigvald dodged the blow, thrust out his foot, and tripped the hunchback as he rushed. Akhala fell headlong, striking his forehead upon the corner of a bench, and the sword flew from his fingers. Picking it up, Sigvald thrust it through the old man's breast.

Shrieking, Bethoc drew a knife from her girdle and flew at the murderer. Sigvald struck her across the wrist with the flat of the sword, and the knife clattered to the floor. Dropping his weapon, he flung his arms about her, and drew her, struggling, biting, tearing, to his breast.

Again the door opened. Guthorm and Rognvald, Sigvald's brother, stood in the entrance, staring in horror at the brutal sight. Guthorm spoke first.

"You bloody dog!" he gasped. "You coward! To slay a cripple, an old man, who has shown you hospitality! If Harald hears of this——"

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Still crushing the girl to him, Sigvald turned to face his accuser.

"Harald will not hear of it," he interrupted, "unless you tell him. The old fool attacked me with his sword. I merely had the good fortune to wrench it from him. His death was a just punishment. The girl attacked me, too."

"It is easy to see why," Guthorm scowled. "How can I keep order among the warriors, if a noble and a captain steals girls and murders cripples? If Harald were here, you would hang for this. As it is, you shall pay this girl the full fine prescribed by our law for the murder of a father, and see the old man buried at your own cost. This is but justice; as for punishment, you shall never be Earl of Orkney while I live. Power should be wielded only by the upright. Rognvald, you shall be earl."

Rognvald looked at his brother with eyes that blazed with angry contempt.

"I care nothing for the cast-off honors of a coward," he answered. "Let the hound who calls himself my brother see to it that he never enters my tent again, never treads the same ship-deck with me, never stands where his shadow may fall upon me and pollute me; or, by Odin, I will cut him to ribbons!"

The skin about Sigvald's protruding cheek-bones turned white, his huge jaw jutted out viciously, and a dull flame smoldered in each cheek. Slowly, he relaxed his hold about the girl, who retreated to the farthest corner of the room, and stared at him in cold horror. With difficulty she spoke, the words falling heavily from her lips.

"Let him keep his gold. Think you an honorable woman would receive anything from such as he? I will bury my father with my own hands, and go to my mother's people."

As if roused by her voice, the dying Akhala's eyelids fluttered, and his lips formed half-uttered words that murmured in ghostly hate:

"Take nothing from him; he is accursed. My dying curse shall ride with him, sail with him, sleep with him! He shall die in a hostile land, slain by a dead man's bite!"

And the murdered Finn breathed out his vengeful soul.

In sheer horror, Guthorm and Rognvald recoiled from the murderer. As he passed out, half-defiant, half-frightened, they stood aside to let him pass, and stared after him as one stares at a deadly, loathsome serpent.

"Cursed by a Finn!" Guthorm murmured. "Cursed by a Finn!"

AS SHE had said, Bethoc buried her father with her own hands, a stone's throw from his own threshold, on the other side of a windbreak of stunted pines, which protected the hall from the force of the sea-bleak wind. Then, her eyes red with weeping, she turned her back upon the hall which had been her home, and walking swiftly across the meadows dotted with grazing cattle, she made her way toward the near-by forest, and the rugged mountains which rose up from its depths. Her face was stern with purpose now, and her lips moved steadily, forming the word:

"Connal! Connal!"

THEIR WORK done, the Scottish Isles cleared of the pirates who had long infested them, the Norwegians prepared to sail north and east, to the appointed rendezvous with the main squadron of Harald, their king. But there was grave trouble in the camp; they had expected to leave Sigvald behind with a score of well-manned ships, to hold the new-won islands as Earl of Orkney; and now Sigvald had forfeited his earlship.

There was no one to leave in charge, for not a captain in all the fleet would wear the sullied honors of Sigvald. Even if they had not scorned to take his bloody leavings, they were not hardy enough to risk the Finn's curse, which they were convinced would light on any man who accepted the forfeited dignity.

In vain Guthorm coaxed, threatened, and promised. No one would stay behind to guard their conquests and brave the vengeance they feared for Akhala's murder. The council Guthorm called broke up in sullen mutterings and black looks. So, knowing his Northmen would not alter their resolution, the old leader determined to sail away with all his host, meet King Harald, and leave the appointing of Sigvald's successor to him. The islands would hardly run away in the meantime, and the vikings being exterminated, no one was left who could dispute their possession with Harald.

Foraging-parties were sent inland, to seize the shaggy, dwarfish cattle of the

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cowed hill-folk, the poor crops, and the heady drink which the Scottish mountaineers brewed from wild honey. Much provision would be needed for the voyage 'round the mainland of Scotland, nor would there be any later opportunity for getting it. The near-by clans, who had lent their fierce aid to the beaten vikings, had been subjected to such stern punishment that they would not dare refuse food and drink, even to their last morsel, to their conquerors.

And while the foraging-parties browbeat the grudging Scots, the sailors turned to with hearty good-will, repairing the ships, scraping their bottoms, and overhauling sails and cables, glad with surpassing gladness at the prospect of returning to their homes and dear ones. So well did they work that all was ready for departure within four days.

But not all who had gone forth for food returned. Guthorm had underestimated the courage of the Scots, who defended their scanty possessions with the valor of despair. It was a week before all the foraging-parties were accounted for, and all of them had lost heavily. Yet they had obtained that for which they had been sent; and since Harald would be waiting for them, there was no time for fresh action against the clans. Due punishment would be meted out when Harald sent an earl to Scotland.

Guthorm's face grew black with rage at the report of his officers, but he knew better than to keep his royal nephew waiting; besides, his men were sick for home and would not endure further delay. So the galleys were thrust out into the bleak water, laden, and manned.

During that anxious week Sigvald kept to himself. His own three ships, like the rest, were overhauled and made ready for departure by his seamen; but he stayed in his tent. Whenever necessity forced him out, he met only black looks, angry mutterings, and sidelong glances of contempt and fear. He who had been popular with the ship-captains and worshiped by the men for his reckless valor, was now an outcast.

Not one of all the host but despised him for his crime and feared the very sight of him for the curse which rested upon him. Even the bowmen who manned the stern-rooms of the long-ships in battle, held in least estimation among all the fleet, spat when his shadow passed them by.

His own men, however, stood by him, and with good reason. Wild, turbulent warriors from the waste regions about upper Thrandheim Fjord, they had been the last to enter King Harald's service, and were least trusted. In the old days, Sigvald had been both pirate and oppressor of the poor, and his swordsmen of the Meres had earned an unpleasant reputation for brutal cruelty. The other Norwegians hated them for this, and admitted the Meresmen into their company only because Harald liked and trusted Sigvald.

But now that Sigvald had forfeited Harald's favor, the old grudge burst forth in renewed hatred. Now, too, Sigvald's warriors shared the curse which rested on their master. No man crossed the space between the encampment of the main host and the tents of Sigvald; no word was spoken between the honest men and those on whom the Finn's curse had fallen.

On the eighth day the tents were struck and brought on board; the long oars were run out; the water-butts were loaded into the ship's boats. Clad in full armor, his seal cloak wrapped about him, Sigvald strode into Guthorm's presence.

"I will not be sailing with you," he announced.

"That is good news," the old war-duke answered. "Whither will you go? For you will scarcely stay here, I think."

"I sail for Iceland," Sigvald answered.

"You could not do better. Iceland is the only place where Harald's anger will not follow you, and you will find plenty of rascals there who will be glad of your company."

Sigvald's wrath, which had been seething and mounting in his breast since Guthorm had surprised him over the dying Akhala, nearly burst all bounds. He laid his hand on his sword, but he knew better than to draw it. Guthorm alone was formidable enough, and the whole host was back of him.

"Farewell," Sigvald offered.

Guthorm turned on his heel without a word, and stalked down to the water's edge.

An hour later the red hulls of the Norwegian fleet had almost melted into the horizon. Sigvald's three galleys still swung on their cables, waiting for the boats to bring the crews aboard. The Meresmen stood in a great ring about their leader on the rocky beach, their eyes fierce and anxious. Sig-

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vald scrutinized them carefully, alert for the first sign of disaffection; but there was none. He was their leader; their homes were his ships.

"Who among you longs to go to Iceland with empty pouch?" he asked at last.

They stood silent, waiting on his words.

"The vikings, whom you helped to slay, are gone to Odin," Sigvald resumed. "What thanks does Guthorm or Harald offer you for the blood you have shed in their service?"

An angry growl rumbled from their throats.

"Pay yourselves, then," he went on. "When the two fleets meet, they sail back to Norway, where they will have plenty of meat and ale and red gold. The women will welcome them. But there are none to welcome you, there is no gold and no feasting for you. Because ye are true to me, Norway is closed to you forever.

"There is nothing more in life for you, unless ye win it with your own hands. If I lead you where there is good spoil, where ye may drink the ale other men have brewed, and reap the gold others have scraped together, will ye follow me?"

Their faces fierce with greed, the Meresmen burst into shouts of applause. At length one, more thoughtful than the rest, asked:

"Where may these good things be found, Master? Whom shall we plunder?"

"All who sail the seas," Sigvald replied. "Cast out from among honest men, we will prey upon them. Harald will think we have gone to Iceland; and, knowing that the vikings are dead, he will not look for us to renew the breed. We will turn pirate again. It will be a year before Harald hears of our deeds, and nearly another year before he can hunt us out. By that time we will have stripped the Scottish coasts bare as a boiled beef-bone, and will be safe to the south, in England, where his hosts can not follow us. What say ye?"

Red Gorm, a captain old in evil, flung his ax high in the air, and caught it dexterously by the haft.

"Lead on, Master!" he cried. "We follow! But first let us go inland, among the Scots of the interior, who do not expect us. There will be good loot there."

"So be it," Sigvald agreed. "We can not march overland, though, for there are high mountains and tangled forests in the way, swarming with skin-clad Scots. It will be better to sail south half a day's voyage, past Laxford and Handa Isle, to a bay which is called Thor's Ear, and goes far up into the land. The ships can be brought in there out of storm's way, and a day's scramble over bare crags will bring us into the heart of Maelbrigh's country.

"Maelbrigh of the Tusk, having kept peace with us, will not expect hostility. His clansmen—so the Finn that is dead told me—are a proud folk who have no dealings with the less ancient clans about them, so we need not fear that he will be warned of our coming. There is a lake which forms the southern border of his possessions; if we are too hard-pressed, it will guard our backs. To the ships!"

HIS black eyes on fire with rage, his swarthy cheeks livid, Connal MacMaelbrigh shook his ax till the six-foot ashen haft quivered.

"By Saint Brighid!" he cried. "I will hew the heathen Norseman into raven's meat for this!"

Bethoc's pride in her hero lighted her eyes, but she shook her head as she surveyed his short, sturdy figure. The young Scot was a typical mountaineer: short-bodied and great in the chest, long and thick of limb, his frame promised boundless endurance and active strength; but he would scarce reach Sigvald's shoulder.

"He is much taller than you," she urged, "and he wears a coat of iron rings."

"He will need more iron than he can carry," Connal promised, "if I can but reach the coast before he sails away. He goes soon, you say?"

"He told—my father—" the girl choked a sob—"that the Northmen would depart as soon as they could provision their ships."

"That will require some days yet," Connal calculated grimly. "The clans will not give up their grain and meat without fighting. I will fill my pouch with meat, and go at once."

Bethoc clutched at his deer-skin mantle.

"No, no!" she exclaimed in sudden fear. "He knows you by sight; you could never reach him. He would bid his bowmen shoot you down while you were yet afar off."

The Scot passed a sinewy hand over his craggy features.

"That is true," he grudged. "It will be work for the whole clan. It is my father's

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business, anyway, seeing that Akhala was his friend. But—" a dusky red flamed under his dark skin—"I will slay him with my own hand! I will let no man wrong you and live!"

Bethoc smiled through her tears.

"It will be doubly sweet if you kill him; but do not let him come to close grips."

She reached for Connal's long ax, and felt of the sharp spike that rose above its blade.

"Run this through him before he can close."

"Nay, I will trust the edge," the mountaineer answered. "A swinging two-handed blow at the base of the neck makes a mock of iron coats. Farewell, now. I go to the council-place; do you stay with my mother."

He disappeared among the thick heather that clothed the brae-side, swinging away with long strides. The girl stood looking after him a moment, watching the bushes close behind him; then she walked wearily down the slope toward the village in the glen. It was a collection of mud-and-wattle huts, perhaps fifty in number, scattered hugger-mugger about a brawling stream and on the slopes all about.

Bounding through the wet growth like a young stag, Connal topped the gnarled crest of Ben Scaur, and half the time out of sight among the heather, raced down the side into a glen much greater and wider than that of the village. It was also watered by a stream, but one more sluggish, which spread out over a fairly level plain. Patches of vivid green amid the darker foliage indicated treacherous bogs, the more deadly for the beauty of their smooth, rich moss.

With the fearlessness of the man who treads his own ground, Connal dashed straight in among them, leaping from one to another of the scattered brown tufts that afforded the only safe thoroughfare. A misstep, and the greedy green slime would swallow him up; but he made his way with sure feet to a flat-topped hill that rose from the center of the bog. It was the outcrop of an older formation; a low, rock-girt eminence, its top walled and bristling with huge boulders flung by the hand of riotous nature.

From rock to rock he swung himself to the crest, dodged in and out among crags that dwarfed him, till he emerged into a clear flat space nearly fifty yards each way, and absolutely hidden from sight from without by the great boulders which towered on all sides of it.

Along all four sides of the enclosure, rows of rough, stone-slabbed houses, their chinks stopped with bark and moss, ranged in rough regularity; at the northern end, under an overhanging ledge, rose one twice as large as any of the rest. Before the doorless entrance of each stood or squatted a mountaineer. All were old or nearing old age: white-haired, wrinkled, but sturdy veterans. These were the councilors of the clan, the elders of a dozen villages like that in the glen beyond Ben Scaur.

At the sight of the elders, Connal slowed his pace, and walked down the middle of the stone-girt space between the houses, speaking reverently to each man he passed. Each nodded gravely in reply.

Stopping at the entrance of the great house beneath the ledge, Connal cried out:

"Maelbrigh! My father!"

A skin curtain was swept aside from the cavernous opening of the dwelling, and a head was thrust forth. It was a fierce head, baleful and ugly, but majestic with a wild dignity. Rough red hair, grizzled and matted, surmounted bony, savage features; the forehead was split by a ragged scar that ran from hair to mid-nose; the broad face was seamed and cross-seamed with marks of battle. The eyes burned with the fires of ancient feuds; but the feature which leaped to prominence beyond all the others was a long, twisted, brown tooth that shot out from the lower jaw, jagged and sharp, like the tusk of a boar. It was this which had won Chief Maelbrigh his surname, "Maelbrigh of the Tusk."

The hillman's body followed his head, and Maelbrigh stood before his son. His figure was squat, but enormously broad and powerful. His bare, knotted arms were covered with thick red hair, lighter than his jutting beard.

"What brings a young man to this sacred place at the time of council?" he asked, sternly.

"War, my father," Connal answered.

"It is for the elders to decide whether war comes, and when," his father admonished. "What has a youth of twenty Winters to do with such things?"

"A Norseman has murdered Akhala, the Finn," Connal explained, his tones ringing

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loud and clear among the rocks. "His body still warm from the bed Akhala spread for him, his throat still wet with the wine of hospitality, Sigvald, the Norwegian, struck down his host in his own hall."

THE old men 'round about them still sat gravely and solemnly; but every face was turned toward the chief, every eye betrayed angry horror. There is no crime which the Scot abhors as he abhors the breach of hospitality.

Maelbrigh seized his son by the shoulder.

"Why did the Fionn-Gall do this thing?" he asked, using the term which the hill-folk applied to the Northmen only in anger.

"Because Akhala refused to sell his daughter into dishonor."

The chief strode into the center of the place of council, and facing each side in successive order, addressed the elders of his clan:

"Fathers of the people," he cried, "Chiefs of the twelve septs of Clan Cruithne, ye have heard the accusation brought by the blood of Akhala against the Fionn-Gall. Akhala was our friend. He has married into our kindreds, and his daughter is of our blood. As he has ever kept his word to us, we must now keep the oath we swore to him, when we took him under our protection against the lesser clans, against sword and fire, starvation or exile.

"We are few in numbers against the ship-army of the Northmen; but our God is stronger than the gods of the heathen, and right is with us. What is your will?"

All eyes turned to the south, where sat a lean, wide-shouldered old man, the oldest of the council. His eyes were veiled with the blue film of blindness; his white beard covered his chest. He rose slowly, groping for the wall of his house, and supported himself with an unsteady hand against the stone.

"War!" he shrilled, fiercely. "War on the despoiler of homes, on the violater of hospitality. Against such there can be no peace, while the mountains stand and the sun revolves in the heavens!"

Maelbrigh turned to the east; but before his eyes could search the faces of the elders there, all sprang to their feet, shouting in fierce tones:

"War! Connachar of the Trumpets has spoken! War!"

The old man, Connachar of the Trumpets, turned toward the entrance of his hut and called within, reaching out his skinny hand. Some one within thrust into it a rude cross fashioned from two green branches. The elder nearest to him stood by to guide the blind man's steps; and Connachar, holding the cross in one hand, received from the unseen one within the hut an earthen bowl filled with glowing embers. Then, aided by his younger fellow, he shuffled unsteadily forward toward Maelbrigh, and set the bowl at the chief's feet. A second bowl was brought to him, and placed beside the first.

Then Connachar reached out his hand, groping till he found young Connal.

"Connal, son of Maelbrigh," he asked solemnly, "when was this deed of shame done?"

"But yesterday, Most Reverend," the boy answered. "Bethoc came straight over the mountain by the clan's war-trail, without pause or rest."

"The Northmen depart soon?"

"As soon as they can provision their ships, Most Reverend. Within seven suns at most."

"Then we must strike quickly."

And Connachar of the Trumpets, chief elder and priest of the clan, who had fought in a hundred battles and been consecrated at Columba's own shrine, began the rite of the fiery cross. Guided by the hand of Maelbrigh, he thrust the cross of green twigs into the bowl of coals, till the wood hissed, smoked, and slowly came to a glow. When the three points had all been charred, he thrust them into the second bowl. One after another, the hot ends hissed and were extinguished in bull's blood. Then, holding the cross high above his head, Connachar cried to the four quarters of the earth:

"Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ on the sides of me, Christ above me! Christ hallow the cross, speed the gathering, and bless the war we wage!"

And turning to Connal:

"Young man, speed with this sacred emblem to the four villages of the north! When they are warned, deliver the cross to the last man of them, and bid him speed to the villages of the east! And so the word shall go till all twelve villages be commanded to come to the council-place! The gathering is to-morrow at midnight. Let no man fail of the tryst, save him alone

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from whose hand old age has struck the sword! Speed!"

And holding the fiery cross before him, Connal sped to summon the clan to war.

THE moon, a little past full, shone down upon the council-place, pervading rather than piercing a thick white blanket of fog. Rising from the bottom of the wet glen, the fog mounted slowly in the windless midnight air, and mingled with the moonlight into a translucent milkiness, through which objects loomed vague and mysterious, seeming far greater than by day. Hither the sure feet of the clansmen had brought them from the outlying villages of the mountain-sides, by paths followed by instinct through the fog-wrapped moss, where sight was of no avail.

The rocky fastness was packed with men ranged shoulder to shoulder; they swarmed upon the boulders lining its sides, so that the place of council was heavy with their breath and murmurous with their whisperings. Now and then one, shifting his position, caught the gleam of the moon on his neighbor's spear-point; but a stranger below the rocks would neither have seen nor heard a sign of them for the pearly density of the fog. Yet eight hundred warriors were here: every man who could bear arms from the twelve villages of Clan Cruithne.

Silent as they had come, they glided away, having heard the commands of their chief. There was nothing for them to ask, nothing to argue; the elders had decided for them each man's part. They spent the night among the heather, wrapped in their skin mantles.

Though he knew he must strike before the Northmen could sail away, Maelbrigh was in no haste. Guthorm's crews outnumbered his little force many times, and were better armed. The Highland chief had no intention of attacking the entire fleet; better far to mark down his man, isolate him if he could, and slay him before the main body of the Fionn-Gall could come to his rescue. To that end Maelbrigh sent a dozen picked men over the range separating his own district from the shore, with orders to spy upon the fleet.

Their task was easy. With no clanking mail to betray them, the men of the heather knew how to conceal themselves behind the slightest cover, though almost in the midst of a watchful enemy. Lurking among the cliffs that lined the shore, along the paths by which the foraging-parties returned, they saw and heard nearly everything that took place in the Norse camp. They overheard the bickering at Guthorm's council, saw the quarrel between him and Sigvald, and learned of Sigvald's intention to sail for Iceland.

Tarrying till the main-fleet was hull-down on the horizon, slipping down the tumbled mass of cliff unperceived, the spies overheard the outcast's instructions to his outlaw warriors, and realized that his purpose was the destruction of their own clan and the pitiful loot of their own poor villages. But the mountain-range which would delay Sigvald's attack was no obstacle to them; they returned as they had come, swiftly and unseen.

LATE on the second night following, the host of Sigvald lay, shivering and comfortless, beside the still waters of a Highland lake. They dared not light a fire, for the land was hostile, their camp in the heart of the enemy's country. Every man had his weapons close at hand. At dawn they would skirt the lake, and six hundred strong, would search out every village in the territory of Clan Cruithne with fire and sword.

At last a light breeze whispered in the trees; a fox barked; a crow shrieked hoarsely from a clump of stunted pines. Sigvald sprang to his feet; the camp was already astir about him. The darkness was paling rapidly.

Sigvald raised his horn to his lips; but its sound was not heard. From all about them, so close that it seemed to split their ear-drums, a savage yell rang from hundreds of unseen throats. Then, with the swiftness of a mountain storm, before the startled Norsemen could snatch up their weapons and form a shield-wall, the undergrowth about the camp erupted wild figures and flashing arms.

A hail of arrows beat upon the Meresmen. The surprise was utter. Still heavy with sleep, some were cut to pieces before they could rise; others rushed to close grips, their eyes yet unused to the faint light, and fell pierced by the swift javelins of the Scots. A seaman, staring about him in fierce bewilderment, received one of the barbed shafts through both cheeks, and

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ran about shrieking horribly. The camp was all riot and confusion.

But the arrow-flights ceased; for now the battle-mad Scots flung aside their bows and rushed in with their long axes and six-foot swords. Scorning defensive armor, trusting in the length and shearing power of their Highland swords, they burst in among the disorganized Norsemen from all sides. Their great blades wrought terrible execution; whirled about their wielders' heads with all the strength of both mighty arms, they clove through mail, flesh, and bone. There was no guard that could resist them.

But close fighting was the Northman's own game. No longer galled by flights of unseen arrows, they feared no man that ever drew steel at close grips. Hardened in their campaigns with King Harald, toughened by the sea and the tug of oars, trained warriors and disciplined soldiers, they fought their way doggedly to one another's side, till first a cluster of individual groups fought shield to shield and back to back, and then the groups joined together into lines of battle.

The Norsemen's shorter, less cumbrous swords darted in past the guard of the hillmen, stabbed through the unmailed breasts, and cleared a way to union with the nearest struggling groups of their comrades.

Sigvald, his crest pierced by an arrow, hacked and stabbed with desperate strength in the midst of a swirling mass of Scots. His shield was torn to splinters, but his blade was both sword and shield, and his giant strength bore down one adversary after another. At last he was free, with four maddened Highlanders after him. To the nearest line of his men he ran, shouting orders at the top of his voice.

At the word of command half the shield-wall, pivoting on Red Gorm, wheeled to the right, dashed forward a score of paces, and hooked up with the flank of another hard-pressed line. As they joined, Gorm's ax flashed twice, dashing the claymore out of a hillman's hand, and splitting his skull.

On to the third group Sigvald rushed, his sword point clearing a way. Rallying the wavering sea-rovers, he led them in a ferocious attack upon the thick of their opponents, till the red swords of the North won through. In half an hour, the entire Norse force was arrayed in a compact square, shields overlapping, swords, spears, and axes working furiously and dripping to the finger-grips.

Against one face of the square Maelbrigh himself led a ragged, desperate horde of hillmen. The chief's only weapon was a stabbing-spear, short-shafted, with a long, broad, keen-edged blade. This he wielded with the skill of long practise, thrusting home with a savage rip which tore through the toughest mail and disemboweled its victim. Maelbrigh's thrust was sure, his aim steady, though his beard was flecked with foam and his eyes burned with the cold fury of the fighting Scot.

Again and again the undisciplined clansmen recoiled before the trained resistance of the Fionn-Gall; but always they came on again with renewed fury. They were all fighting now with the same quiet ferocity of the Gael, stranger and more formidable to their superstitious foes than even the berserk-fury, which the Norse knew better how to meet. No wounds stopped the mountaineers, save those through which death entered at once.

At last Maelbrigh, rallying them once more, led them in a close-packed mass against the shield-wall. The very sight of them, their weight, and the flash of their terrible, long claymores, struck fear to the seamen's hearts; but the Norse training had its way. At a blast from Sigvald's horn, the ranks divided. With a shout of joy, the Scots rushed in; but before they could close, a flight of arrows tore through the gap in the Norse lines and piled the attackers up in fearful slaughter.

Roaring with disappointed wrath, Maelbrigh leaped over the bodies of his dead and flung himself full on Sigvald. His stabbing-spear was launched straight at the Northman's breast; but Red Gorm interposed his huge bulk between his leader and the fearful blade. Through shield and mail it rent, and Red Gorm fell writhing in the death-throes.

But Maelbrigh's weapon clung fast in the iron boss of the shield. In vain the chief strove to wrench it out; while yet he tugged, the sword of Sigvald descended swiftly, catching him on the neck. Like a huge ball, Maelbrigh's head, completely severed, bounded to the ground before his conqueror.

As the shield-wall closed again, Sigvald snatched up the bloody head and stepped back inside the hollow square. Lifted upon the shoulders of two sturdy bowmen, the pirate held his trophy on high, brandishing his dripping sword, and calling to the Scots to behold their chief.

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THE Scots saw; stricken with terror, those in front, who had witnessed Maelbrigh's death, broke into the wail of the coronach. At once, those who were attacking the other faces of the square took up the cry. Their morale was broken; every note of the prolonged death-wail cowed their hearts yet more. They shrank back, broke, and fled.

With a shout of triumph, the warriors of the shield-wall started to pursue; but Sigvald bellowed out to them to stand fast, and they reformed again. The Meresman knew well that when the temperamental Scot flees, pursuit but drives him to renewed and bitterer resistance; and in spite of the slaughter, the hillmen still outnumbered their antagonists.

Connal, commanding the assault on the opposite side of the square, was in a frenzy of grief and rage at his father's fall. When the boy saw the bleeding head in the hand of his arch-enemy, he sprang to the attack with utter recklessness, wielding his great ax with terrible effect. He tore the shield from the nearest foeman's hand, stabbed him through with the spike-point, and sent the ax-head crashing through the brain of the next.

Connal's single force had almost breached the defense, when that spirit-breaking death-song broke out on the other side of the square. His own men took it up, wavered, and fled. Cursing them, Connal ordered them back; but a huge Highlander picked the frenzied boy up in his massive arms and bore him struggling off.

Half-way up the slope of Ben Scaur the Scots turned, halted, and all clustered together, glaring down at the Northmen. Beaten, they were still dangerous, given a leader. And the leader was there.

Wrenching free from the man who had saved him, Connal faced his surly warriors, and cried in shame and rage:

"Coward dogs, will you leave the head of your chief to adorn the house of the breaker of hospitality? Are ye women, to cower and sing the coronach when ye see blood? Will ye force me to forego my revenge, that ye may save your own soft skins? Flee then, and excuse yourselves to the women if ye can. I go down to die alone, that my father's name may not be shamed!"

Ax in hand, the young chief turned his back upon them, and marched steadfastly down upon the formidable shield-wall, alone.

He had covered half the distance when he had his answer. A swelling shout of rage and shame burst forth from his clansmen. They surged forward, broke into a charge, and gathering momentum as they ran, picked up their leader in full career. A moment later the whole mass, nearly seven hundred strong, hit full on the nearest face of the square, which up to now had had to bear only a divided assault.

Their weight, and the force of the rush, crumpled the defense like paper. The shield-wall bent in around them, broke, and was swept away like Autumn leaves before a Spring freshet. The Scottish blades tore through all resistance, cut the bowmen to pieces, smashed the struggling Norse lines into red confusion.

For a moment the fight broke up into a mêlée, a riot, while Sigvald strove in vain to rally his men and stem the disorder. At last the disciplined Meresmen, conquering their panic, got themselves into some sort of formation, and began their slow, determined retreat.

The Scots hung upon their flanks and rear like wolves, leaping in with sword and shield, slashing at the shield-walls with red axes. And ever Connal sought Sigvald; but the Norse chief was no longer taking the chance of single combat. Wherever the fight was momentarily thickest, his sword flashed, holding off the pursuit; then he forced his way to the next beleaguered point.

There was no safety for the Norsemen short of the shore; and that was a good day's journey back over badly broken country. But five miles from the shore, a long, hill-girt valley led down to the bay of Thor's Ear; and at the valley's head their horses were waiting in the care of two-score spearmen. For during their stay in the land in Harald's service, they had looted and broken hundreds of the Scottish ponies. The Norse raider knew the value of mounted infantry.

Not a man of them who survived could have told how they made their way back, scrambling over precipitous crags, wading waist-deep through swift mountain-streams, breaking through dense heather and thickets of brambles. And over and through all, they had constantly to turn upon their fierce pursuers, fight for an instant's clearage, flee, fight, and flee again. Over and over the consummate generalship, the iron strength of Sigvald saved scores of lives.

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To the very end the Scots pressed them, Connal crying them on implacably.

At last, panting down a long slope, bursting through a dense grove of mountain-ash, the remnant of the Norse host emerged into the valley they sought. A shout of wonder greeted them; thirty spearmen rushed forward to support them and check the pursuit, while a handful stayed by the horses, herded into an angle of the mountain-wall. With trembling, gasping cries the beaten host—scarce two hundred of them yet alive—forced their bursting lungs to hold them up in a frenzied dash for the horses.

The Scots saw, and strove to close in. They were fresher than the fugitives, for they were mountaineers; but the thirty devoted spearmen were all unwearied. A short, sharp fight raged, while the exhausted Norsemen were mounting; then the spearmen dropped their pikes and fled. Half of them won free, leaped upon the unsaddled horses, and galloped for the shore.

The panting hillmen followed, their rage unsatisfied. Fired with the passion for revenge, Connal outstripped the swiftest of his warriors; but the speed of the horses bore his foes further and further from him. Sigvald rode in the rear of the retreat, like the good general he was; and straining after him, Connal could see something round bobbing at the viking's saddle-bow. His father's head. . . .

With a snarl of fury, Connal turned, waited for the pursuit to catch up, and snatched a bow from one of his warriors. The man silently handed him an arrow; drawing it to the head, Connal loosed at the fleeing figure of Sigvald. The shaft whistled through the air, and stuck quivering in the rump of the Norseman's pony. With an almost human shriek, the beast bounded high in the air and came down in mid-stride, running like a hurt deer. But the wound was not mortal, and Connal knew his foe had escaped. He was out of range now, and riding furiously. He would reach his ships, shove out, and sail away.

BUT Sigvald did nothing of the kind. Though he had not dreamed of such a retreat, the Norse chieftain had taken the customary precaution before entering hostile country; the hundred men-at-arms left behind to guard the ships had drawn all three vessels high and dry, just above tide-mark, put them on rollers, and arranged them in a square, with the open side toward the sea.

They were now held upright and heavily banked with sand, as a defense against any attack from the coast-tribes during Sigvald's absence with the main body. And when the avenging Scots drew in sight of the shore, they found this ship-wall fronting them, and Sigvald's shattered army behind it.

The Highlanders made a few attempts to storm; but the well-directed arrow-flights from the long Norse bows drove them back with heavy loss. Connal himself, in the fore-front of the third and last assault, was wounded in the left arm and the right foot. Farewell now to his hopes of a personal settlement, hand to hand, with his mighty adversary. The boy was near to weeping with disappointment.

The fight settled down to a siege of starvation. The galleys were well-supplied with both food and water, stored before the ill-starred raid; and the Scots could easily supply themselves by sending foraging-parties back into the hills. For four days they faced each other so, the Scots not daring, and the Norse unable, to renew active hostilities.

At sunrise of the fifth day, Connal had himself carried down the beach, to almost within arrow-shot. The brilliant banners of the Norsemen fluttered over each ship, defiant as ever; but the bearded faces along the shield-rails no longer hurled jibes of defiance. The vikings were silent and gloomy.

"They are starving," thought Connal. "They will soon yield now."

But he was wrong. On the next morning, just at dawn, he was wakened by a hasty clutch at his shoulder.

"They are gone, Lord Connal!" cried his awakener.

"Gone! It can not be. They could not free their ships and thrust off without rousing us!"

"Nevertheless, they are gone," the clansman repeated. "Come and see."

And leaning on his shoulder, Connal hobbled out into the glow of the dying camp-fires. Here he was gently raised to the shoulder of a gigantic Highlander, who bore him to the beach, the warriors following.

The ships were gone; the sand that had banked them 'round lay about in heaps;

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the track of the keels was plain down to high-water mark. All that remained was a deserted pavilion of sail-cloth, in the midst of the space that the ships had enclosed.

Apparently deserted; for when the angry Scots surged down upon it, they found a single Norse warrior within, seated on the ground beside a rough couch of skins piled on trestles. Before him lay a severed head, hideous with decaying purple flesh and clotted blood. It was the head of Maelbrigh.

Connal flung himself down from the shoulder of the gillie with a muffled cry, heedless of the pain of his wounded foot, and caught the head to his breast. Then, turning to the seated Northman, he demanded:

"What is the meaning of this? What do you here, when your fellows have gone?"

"I keep the death-watch over my lord, whom I loved," the man returned. "Would you have an earl of the Meres die unattended?"

"Die? Who?" gasped Connal.

"Sigvald. He lies here; but you harm his corpse over my body." And the faithful vassal drew his knife.

"I harm not dead men," Connal assured him, scarce knowing whether he dreamed or not. "Unveil him."

The man swept the cover from the couch. Sigvald himself lay there, dead indeed, blue from head to foot, and hideously swollen.

"But how died he?" Connal stammered.

"That slew him," the Norseman answered, pointing to the head of Maelbrigh, which Connal still clasped to his breast. "He bound it to his saddle-bow when he escaped you in the valley yonder; but an arrow reached his horse, which plunged and reared. Yonder tusk—" and he indicated the malformed tooth that jutted from the jaw of the dead head—"ripped a great gash in Sigvald's thigh as the horse came down. On the second day a fever seized him, for the wound was infected.

"Night before last he died, of a dead man's bite, as the Finn he slew foretold; though indeed any ragged wound might have so slain him, prophecy or no prophecy. I alone of all Sigvald's warriors dared stay by him, for they feared the Finn's curse would light on them. The cowards! Now go, and let me bury my dead."

Connal turned away.

"I thank God," he said solemnly, "that though I slew him not, I still had some share in his death. I was pledged to it."

As he laid his hand on the hanging of the tent, a hand from without plucked it back, and a figure stood outlined against the glow of morning. Connal started back in surprise, his wounded foot gave way, and he fell to his knee. Instantly two soft arms were about him, sustaining him.

"Bethoc!" he cried. "How came you here?"

"Could I remain with the other women, when you stayed so long away? I feared you were slain, and I could not bear to wait. I felt I must be with you, living or dead. Did I not send you into this peril? And now you are wounded!"

Her voice trembled.

He put his hands behind her head, and drew her to him.

"It is nothing," he said. "I shall be sound as ever in a few days. Our work is done, Bethoc. See there!"

He pointed to the couch.

Bethoc saw, and nodded gravely.

"Now my father can rest in peace," she commented.

Her face grew wistful at once, and she said, sadly:

"But now I am homeless, a wanderer. Ah, my father, that you had lived!"

Connal looked into the wet eyes.

"I, too, have lost a father," he reminded her. "We must comfort each other, Bethoc."

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THE BELLS OF SAN JUAN

A FOUR-PART STORY
CONCLUSION

by JACKSON GREGORY

Author of "Yahoya," "Silver Slippers," etc.

CHAPTER XIX

VIRGINIA, having changed swiftly to her riding-togs, took up her little black emergency kit, which would lend an air of business urgency to her nocturnal ride with Norton, and stepped out into the hall.

"There's a call for you from Las Estrellas," said Struve, appearing from the front whence his voice had come to her mingled with the excited tones of a Mexican. "Tony Garcia has been hurt; pretty badly, I expect. His brother says that Tony got his hand caught in some kind of machinery he was fooling with late this afternoon and crushed so that it's all but torn off."

Into the light cast by the hotel porch-lamp Norton, leading Persis, rode around the corner of the building.

"I was just going out," said Virginia. "But I'll go on this case first. Mr. Norton is riding with me. Please ask him to wait while I get my other bag."

In her room again, the lamp lighted on her table, she stood a moment frowning thoughtfully into vacancy. Then with a quick shake of the head she snatched up the two other bags which might be needed in treating Tony's hurt and again hastened out. Norton bending from his saddle took them from her. As Struve relinquished into her gauntleted hands the reins of Persis' bridle she swung lightly up to the mare's back.

"The poor fellow must be suffering all kinds of torture," she said as Norton reined in with her. "Let's hurry."

He offered no answer as they clattered out of San Juan and turned out across the level lands toward Las Estrellas. So, as upon another night when speeding upon a similar errand, they rode on for a long time in silence. Again they two alone were pushing out into the dark and the vast silence that was broken only by the soft thudding of their own horses' hoofs and the creak of saddle leather and jingle of spur and bit chains.

"You wanted to talk with me?" suggested the girl after fifteen minutes of wordless restraint between them.

"Yes," he answered. "But not now. That is, if you will give me a further chance after you have done what you can for poor old Tony. You will hardly need to stay at Las Estrellas all night, I imagine. When we leave you can listen to me. Do you mind?"

"No," she said slowly. "I don't mind. I'd rather it was then. You and I have a good bit to think about before we do any talking. Haven't we?"

They fell silent again. The soft beauty of the night over the Southern desert lands —and there is no other earthly beauty like

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it—touched the girl's soul now as it had never done before; perhaps, similarly, it disturbed shadows in the man's. She was distressed by the position in which she found herself and the night's infinite quiet and utter peace was grateful to her. As she left the hotel her thoughts were in chaos; she was caught in a fearsome labyrinth whence there was no escape. Now, though no way out suggested itself, still the stars were shining.

At last the twinkling lights of Las Estrellas, seeming at first fallen stars caught in the mesquite branches, swam into view. Plainly Tony's accident had stimulated much local interest; among the few straggling houses men came and went while a knot of women, children and countless mongrel dogs had congregated just outside of the house where the center of concern lay. A brush-fire in the street crackled right merrily, its sparks dancing skyward.

"You promise me," said Norton as they drew their horses down to a trot, "not to say anything until we can have had time to thresh it all out?"

"I promise," she said wearily.

She entered the sufferer's room first, Norton delaying to tie the horses and lift down the instrument-cases from the saddle strings. She stopped abruptly just beyond the threshold; the smell of chloroform was heavy upon the air. Tony lay white-faced upon a table, Caleb Patten with coat off and sleeves rolled up was bending over him.

"Oh, señorita!" cried a woman, hurrying forward, her hands twisting nervously in her apron. And a torrential outpouring in Spanish greeted the mystified Virginia.

"I thought that I was wanted here," she said, looking about her at the four or five grave faces. "Tony's brother came for me."

One of the men shambled forward to explain.

"Tony want you," he said quickly. "Tony ver' bad hurt. Dr. Patten come in Las Estrellas by accident, he say got to cut off the arm, can't wait too long or Tony die. He just beginnin' now."

The woman who it appeared was Tony's wife and the mother of two of the ragged children out by the fire joined her voice eagerly to the man's. He translated.

"Eloisa say she thank God you come; Tony want you, she want you. Patten charge one hundred dollar an'—" He shrugged eloquently. "She say you do for Tony; you do better than Patten."

Virginia's eyes flashed upon Patten. He came a step toward her his attitude half-belligerent.

"The man had to be operated upon immediately," he said sharply. "He was hurt in the afternoon out on the end of the ranch; has been all day getting in; fainted half a dozen times, I guess. The arm has to come off at the elbow."

"Thank you," returned Virginia quietly, going to the table. "I'll take the case now, Dr. Patten."

"You?" Patten laughed, his eyes jeering. "You operate? Do you think that they want you to cut a skein of silk with a pair of scissors? Cut off a man's arm—how far would you go before you fainted?"

"That'll be about all, Patten," came Norton's voice sternly from the door. "This is Dr. Page's case. Clear out."

"Thank you, Mr. Norton," said Virginia quickly. She was already making an examination of the blood-covered arm and hand and did not look around. "And please clear the room, will you? Let Tony's wife stay, that is all. Eloisa."

The woman came forward, her eyes wide and frightened. Virginia smiled at her reassuringly.

"*No muy malo,*" she said in the few Spanish words which she could summon for the occasion from those she had picked up from the desert people. "*Muy bueno mañana.* And now get me some warm water—*agua caliente.* Mr. Norton, if you will open my instrument-case—no; the other one. And then stand by to help with the anesthetic if Patten hasn't already given him enough to keep him asleep all night!"

She gave her directions concisely and was obeyed. Norton put the last of the undesired onlookers out of the door, closed it after them, found another lamp and some candles, did all that he could think of to help and all that was asked of him. Eloisa, having brought the water, withdrew to a corner and kept her fascinated eyes upon Virginia's face and stubbornly away from her husband's.

Virginia, when she had completed a very thorough examination, turned toward Norton, her eyes blazing.

"Patten has no more right to an M.D. after his name than you have," she cried angrily. "Not so much, for he hasn't even

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any brains! Cut the man's arm off! Why, there is only a simple fracture above the wrist which won't cause a bit of trouble. The hand is another matter; but even it isn't half as badly mangled as it looks. The second and third fingers are terribly crushed; they've got to come off. We might as well do it now, while he is already under the chloroform. Tell Eloisa just how matters stand and then send her out."

Eloisa, already prepared for the greater operation, gasped her gratitude for the lesser and allowed herself to be gently thrust from the room. Then Norton came back to the table, his eyes wonderingly upon Virginia. He knew that she was capable; he had read that fact the first day when he had seen her hands. But it struck him as rather unusual that a girl, any girl no matter what her training, should take hold as she was doing.

And as she selected her instruments, laid them out upon a bit of sterilized gauze upon a chair, cleansed her hands and prepared to operate he began to feel a sense of utter confidence in her. And rapidly his own anger rose at the thought of the crime Patten would have perpetrated.

TONY GARCIA, when in due time his consciousness came back to him bringing the attendant dizzy nausea in its wake, looked down at his side curiously, wondering how it would be to go without an arm. And when his Eloisa told him . . .

"We are going to sell our cow and the goats tomorrow!" vowed Tony faintly. "And give her all the money!"

"*Sí, sí,* Tony," wept the wife.

Whereupon Tony and Eloisa's small children, who were teaching the goats to pull a wagon, set up a wail of grief and rebellion.

IT STRUCK both Virginia and Norton as a shade odd that Patten should be still in Las Estrellas when they rode out of it long after midnight. They saw him standing in the doorway of the one still lighted building of the village as they galloped past. It was the Three Star saloon. Patten's horse was tied in front of it. Since Patten neither drank nor played at dice or cards here might have been matter to ponder on. But in neither mind was there place now for any interest other than that which again held them silent and constrained.

Las Estrellas lost behind them they drew their horses down into a rocking trot, then to a slow walk. Virginia rode with her head up, her eyes upon the field of stars. Her face, as Norton kept close to her side, looked very white in the starlight. He would have given much to have seen her eyes when a little later he began to talk. And she was conscious of a kindred wish.

"Look yonder," she said. "The late moon is coming up. There will be a little more light then and—and I want to look at you, Rod Norton, while we thresh it out."

The thin curved sliver of silver thrusting up over the edge of things in the east, ghostly and pale, added little to the throbbing gleam of the stars; but the waiting for it had put Las Estrellas a mile behind them, had set them alone together out in the heart of the silences, had given them that last excuse to be had to set back an evil moment. Virginia, with a sigh, brought her eyes down from the glitter of the wide heavens and sought Norton's.

"I am afraid," she said listlessly, "that there is no way out for us, Rod Norton."

"There is a way!" he began quickly.

"There is no way unless you do what I say. If you would only give me your word to take the stage tomorrow, to go to a competent surgeon, to submit to the operation. If you would only give me your word——"

"I give you my word!" he said sharply. "That is just the thing which I will never do. Virginia, breathe deep; fill your lungs with the wonder of the night; realize what it means to live; think what it means to die! You say that I am not afraid of death; well, maybe not if it comes in a guise I have grown up to be familiar with. But to lie as I saw Tony Garcia lying just now, powerless, unconscious, without will or knowledge of what was coming to me, and to let a man cut into me—I'd rather die, I think, standing upon my two feet and fighting it out with a gun! You would go on and tell me that the chances would be highly in favor of my recovery; and yet you would admit that the danger would be grave."

"Then you are afraid, after all? That is it? That holds you back?"

She found it hard to believe that he was telling her his true emotion.

"I am merely measuring the chances,"

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he said steadily. "I am satisfied with life as I find it; I do not believe that there is anything wrong with me; I see at least the possibility of death and nothing to be gained by submitting to an operation."

"Then, she said again wearily, "there is no way out."

"But there is! My way, not the one you have thought of. You have stumbled upon a thing which you must forget; that is all. Give me the free swing to finish Jim Galloway, to complete certain other undertakings. Promise me that you will do this; in return I will promise you not to——"

And here he hesitated.

"Not to commit another theft?" She set the matter squarely before him. "Can you promise that, Rod Norton? Could you keep the promise were it once made?"

"Yes."

"No! You could not. You don't understand or you won't understand. You would obey the impulse which would come just as certainly as the sun will rise and set again. So I can neither accept your promise—nor give you mine."

"You will tell what you have guessed?"

"Rather what I know! Even if you were my own brother——"

"Or your lover?" he demanded, a challenge in his voice.

"Or my lover. For his sake if not for the sake of others."

For a little while he made no answer. Again there was absolute silence between them, a troubled silence filled with pain. Then suddenly he leaned close to her, threw out his hand for Persis' rein, jerked both horses back to a fretful standstill.

"Can't you see what you force me to do?" he demanded half-angrily. "Do you picture what your denunciation would do for me? Do you think that I can let you make it?"

His face was so near hers that she could see it clearly in the thin night-light. He could see hers and that it was lifted fearlessly.

"How will you stop me?" she asked quietly.

"I will finish Jim Galloway out of hand," he told her savagely. "It will no longer be the representative of the law against the law-breaker; it will just be Norton and Galloway, both men! I will accomplish the one other matter I have planned. Both will require not over three or four days. During that time—I tell you, Virginia, I have grown into a free man, a man who does what he wants to do, who takes what he wants to take, who is not bound by flimsy shackles of other men's codes. During those three or four days I shall see that you do no talking!"

And once more, her voice quickened, she asked—

"How will you stop me?"

"We have come to a deadlock; argument does no good. Either I must yield to you or you to me. There is too much at stake to allow of a man being squeamish. I don't care much for the job, but by high Heaven I am of no mind to watch life run by through the bars of a penitentiary. After all, action becomes simplified when a crisis comes, doesn't it? There is just one answer, just one way out. You will come with me, now. I will put you where you will have no opportunity to do any talking for the few days in which I shall finish what I have to do." His hand on Persis' rein drew the two horses still closer together. "Give me your promise, Virginia; or come with me!"

Her quick spurt of anger rose, flared and dwindled away like a little flame extinguished by a splash of rain; the tears were stinging her eyes almost before the last word. For she felt that here was no Roderick Norton speaking, but rather a bit of bone pressing upon the delicate machinery which is a man's brain.

"Where would you take me?" she asked faintly.

"To the King's Palace," he answered bitterly. "Where we had one perfect, happy day, Virginia; where, I had hoped, we would have other perfect days. Oh, girl, can't you see," and his voice went thrilling through her, "can't you see what I have hoped, what I have dreamed——"

"You might still hope," she told him steadily. "You might still dream."

"I will!" His eyes shone at her, his erect form outlined against the black of the earth and the gleam of the stars was eloquent of mystery. "There will come a time when you will see life as I see it. And now, for the last time, will you give me your promise, Virginia? It is forced upon you; you will be blameless in giving it. Will you do so?"

She only shook her head, her lips trembling, not trusting her voice. And then, in a sort of daze, she knew that they had turned off to the left, that no longer was

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San Juan ahead of them, that they were riding toward the gloomy bulwark of the mountains.

CHAPTER XX

FLUFF and Black Bill were quarreling. Elmer, while Norton and Virginia were on their way from San Juan to Las Estrellas, had dropped in at the hotel to see his sister. He found upon her office table the card which she always left for him; this merely informed him that she was "out on a case at Las Estrellas." Elmer had called for her purposing to suggest a call upon the Engles. For not yet had he summoned the hardihood to present himself alone at Florrie's home. Now, disgruntled, seeing plainly that Virginia would never get back in time, he went out on the veranda and took solace from the pipe to which he had grown fairly accustomed. To him came the girl of whom he was thinking.

"Hello, Fluff," he said from the shadows.

"Hello, Black Bill," she greeted him. "Where's Virgie?"

"Gone," he informed her, waving his pipe. "On a case to Las Estrellas. I'm waiting for her. Did you want to see her?" Florrie, coming down the veranda to him, giggled.

"No," she told him flippantly. "I'm looking for the Emperor of China. I never was so lonesome——"

"So'm I," said Elmer. He pushed a chair forward with his foot. "Sit down and we'll wait for her. And I'll go in and bring out a couple bottles of ginger ale or something."

"Will she be back real soon?" asked Florrie, pretending to hesitate.

"Sure," he assured her positively.

"All right then." Florrie with a great rustling of skirts sat down. "But you must be nice to me, Black Bill."

"It's always you who starts it," he muttered at her. "I'd be friends if you would. What's the good of spatting like two kids, anyway?"

"We're really not kids any longer, are we?" she agreed demurely. "I feel terribly grown-up sometimes, don't you?"

From which point they got along swimmingly for perhaps five minutes longer than it had ever been possible for them to talk together without "starting something." Elmer, very emphatic in his own mind concerning his matured status, yearned for her to understand it as he did. With such purpose clearly before him—and before her, too, for that matter, since Miss Florrie had a keen little comprehension of her own—he spoke largely of himself and his blossoming plans.

He was a vaquero, to begin with; he had ridden about fifty miles yesterday on range business; he was making money; he was putting part of that money away in Mr. Engle's bank. There was a little ranch on the rim of Engle's big holding which belonged to an old half-breed; Elmer meant to acquire it himself one of these days. And before so very long, too. Mr. Engle had been approached and was looking into it, might be persuaded to advance the couple of thousand dollars for the property, taking as security a mortgage until Elmer could have squared it. Then Black Bill would begin stocking his place, a cow now, a horse, another cow and so on.

He had launched himself valiantly into his tale. But at a certain point he began to swallow and catch at his words and smoke fast between sentences. He had located a dandy spot for a house—the jolliest little spring of cold water you ever saw—a knoll with big trees upon it.

"We'll make up a party with Virginia and Norton some day and ride out there," he said abruptly. "I—I'd like to have you see it, Fluff."

She was tremulously delighted. She sensed the nearest thing to an out-and-out proposal which had ever sung in her ears. She leaned forward eagerly, her hands clasped to keep them from trembling. She was sixteen, he eighteen—and she had his assurance of a moment ago that they were no longer just "kids." And then and there their so long delayed quarrel began. Just at the wrong time, after the time-honored fashion of quarrels. He was ready to twine the vine about the veranda posts of the house on the knoll where the spring and the big trees were; she was ready to plant the fig tree.

Then she had glimpsed something just too funny for anything in the idea of Elmer raising pigs—for he had gone on to that, sagely anticipating a high market another season—and she laughed at him and all unintentionally wounded his feelings. In a flash he was Black Bill again and on his mettle, ready with the quick retort stung from him; and, she parrying his thrust,

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was at once Fluff, the mercuric. The spat was on—they would call it a spat tomorrow if tomorrow were kind to them—and Elmer's ranch and house and cow, horse and pigs were laughed to scorn.

Florrie departed leaving her cruellest laughter to ring in his ears. This might have been a repetition of any one of a dozen episodes familiar to them both but never, perhaps, had Elmer's ears burned so or Florrie's heart so disturbed her with its beating. For, she thought regretfully as she hurried out into the street, they had been getting along so nicely.

She had no business out alone at this time of night and she knew it. So she hurried on, anxious to get home before her father who was returning late from a visit to one of his ranches. Abreast of the Casa Blanca she slowed up, looking in curiously. Then, as again she was hastening on, she heard Jim Galloway's deep voice in a quiet—

"Good evening, Miss Florence."

"Good evening!" gasped Florrie aloud. And "Oh!" said Florrie under her breath. For Galloway's figure had separated itself from the shadows at the side of his open door and had come out into the street, while Galloway was saying in a matter-of-fact way: "I'll see you home."

She wanted to run and could not. She hung a moment balancing upon a high heel in indecision. Galloway stepped forward swiftly, coming to her side.

"Oh dear," the inner Florrie was saying.

A glance over her shoulder showed her Black Bill standing out in front of Struve's hotel. Well, there were compensations.

She started to hurry on and had Jim Galloway been less sure of himself, troubled with the diffidence of youth as was Elmer, he must have either given over his purpose or else fairly run to keep up with her. But being Jim Galloway he laid a gentle but none the less restraining hand upon her arm.

"Please," he said quietly. "I want to talk with you. May I?"

Florrie's arm burned where he had touched her. She was all in a flutter, half-frightened and the other half flattered. A shade more leisurely they walked on toward the cottonwoods. Here, in the shadows, Galloway stopped and Florrie, although beginning to tremble, stopped with him.

"Men have given me a black name here," he was saying as he faced her. "They've made me somewhat worse than I am. I feel that I have few friends, certainly very few of my own class. I like to think of you as a friend. May I?"

It was distinctly pleasant to have a big man like Galloway, a man whom for good or for bad the whole State knew, pleading with her. It gave a new sort of assurance to her theory that she was "grown up"; it added to her importance in her own eyes.

"Why, yes," said Florrie.

"I am going away," he continued gravely. "For just how long I don't know. A week, perhaps a month, maybe longer. It is a business matter of considerable importance, Florence. Nor is it entirely without danger. It will take me down below the border and an American in Mexico right now takes his life entirely into his own hands. You know that, don't you?"

"Then why do you go?"

Galloway smiled down at her.

"If I held back every time a danger-signal was thrown out," he said lightly, "I wouldn't travel very far. Oh, I'll come back all right; a man may go through fire itself and return if he has the incentive which I have," he added meaningly, his tone altering subtly.

Florrie started.

"But before I go," went on Galloway, "I am going to tell you something which I think you know already. You do, don't you, Florence?"

She would not have been Florrie at all but some very different, unromantic and unimaginative creature had she failed of comprehension. Jim Galloway was actually making love to her!

"What do you mean, Mr. Galloway?" she managed to stammer at him.

"I mean that what I am telling you is for your ears alone. I am placing a confidence in you, the greatest confidence a man can place in a girl. Or in a woman, Florence. I am trusting that what I say will remain just between you and me for the present. When I come back I will be no longer just Jim Galloway of the Casa Blanca, but Galloway of one of the biggest ranches in Mexico, with mile after mile of fertile lands, with a small army of servants, vaqueros and retainers, a sort of ruler of my own State! It sounds like a fairy tale, Florence, but it is the sober truth made possible by conditions below the border.

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"My estates will run down to the blue water of the Gulf; I shall have my own fleet of ocean-going yachts; there is a port upon my own land. There will be a home overlooking the sea like a king's palace. Will you think of all that while I am gone? Will you think of me a little, too? Will you remember that my little kingdom is crying out for its queen? No; I am not asking you to answer me now. I am just asking that you hold this as our secret until I come back. Until I come back for you! I shall stand here until you reach your home," he broke off suddenly. "Good night, my dear."

"Good night," said Florence faintly, a little dazed by all that he had said to her. And then, running through the shadows to her home, she was thinking of the boy who had wished to propose to her and of the man who had done so; of Elmer's little home upon the knoll surrounded by a cow, a horse and some pigs—and of a big house like a palace looking out to sea across the swaying masts of white-sailed sea-going yachts!

CHAPTER XXI

LIKE Norton, Virginia found life simplifying itself in a crisis. Upon three hundred and sixty days or more of the average year each individual has before him scores of avenues open to his thought or to his act; he may turn wheresoever he will. But in the supreme moments of his life, with brief time for hesitation granted him, he may be forced to do one of two things; he must leap back or plunge ahead to escape the destiny rushing down upon him like a speeding locomotive threatening him who has come to stand upon the crossing.

Now Virginia saw clearly that she must submit to Norton's mastery and remain silent in the King's Palace or she must seek to escape and tell what she knew or—was there a remaining alternative? If so it must present itself as clearly as the others. Action was stripped down to essentials, bared to its component elements. True vision must necessarily result with no side issues cluttering the view.

She sat upon a saddle-blanket upon the rock floor of the main chamber of the series of ancient dwelling-rooms, staring at the fire which Norton had builded against a wall where it might not be seen from without. The horses were in the meadow down by the stream; she and Norton had tethered them among the trees where they were fairly free from the chance of being seen. Norton was coming up, mounting the deep-worn steps in the cliff-side. He had gone for water; he had not been out of sight nor away five minutes. And yet when she looked up to see him coming through the irregular doorway she had decided.

Looking upon him with such eyes as were given her with which to see him she saw in him both the man and the gentleman. Her anger had died down long ago, smothered in the ashes of her distress; now she summoned to the fore all that she might in extenuation of what he did. She did not blame him for the crimes which she knew he had committed because she was so confident that the chief crime of all had resided in Caleb Patten's abysmal ignorance.

Nor now could she blame Norton that, embarked upon this flood of his life, he saw himself forced to make her his prisoner for a few hours. It was a man's birthright to protect himself, to guard his freedom. And her heart gave him high praise that toward her he acted with all deference, that with things as they were, while he was man enough to hold her here, he was too much the gentleman to make love to her. Would she have resisted, would she have opposed calm argument against a hot avowal? She did not know.

"Virginia," he said gravely as he came about the fire and slumped down across the fire from her, "I feel the brute. But——"

Yes, she had decided, fully decided whether it be for better or for worse. Now she surprised him with one of her quick, bright, friendly smiles while she interrupted.

"Let us make the best of a bad situation," she said swiftly. "I am not unhappy right now; I have no wish to run half-way to meet any unhappiness which may be coming our way. You are not the brute toward me; what you do I do not so much as censure you for. I am not going to quarrel with you; were I in your boots I imagine I'd do just exactly as you are doing. I hope I'd be as nice about it, too. And now, before we drop the subject for good and all, let me say this: no matter what I do, should it even be the betraying of you into the hands of your enemies, to put it quite tragically, I want you to know

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that I wish you well and that is why I do it. Can you understand me?"

"Yes," he said slowly. "It's sweet of you, Virginia. If you got my gun and shot my head off I don't know who should blame you. I shouldn't!" he concluded with a forced attempt to match her smile.

"Then we understand each other? As long as each does the best he can see his way to do the other finds no fault?" And when he nodded she rose quickly and came to him, putting out her hand as he rose. "Rod Norton," she said simply and her eyes shone steady and clear into his, "I wish you the best there is. I think we should both pray a little to God to help us tonight. And now, if you will run up to your "treasure chamber" and bring down the coffee I'll promise to be here when you get back. And to make you a good hot drink; I feel the need of it and so do you."

He went out without an answer, his face grave and troubled again. As her eyes followed him they were no longer gay but wistful and then filled with a sadness which she had not shown to him and then suddenly wet. But before he had gone half a dozen steps from the door she dashed a hasty hand across her eyes and went swiftly to the smallest of the three black leather cases he had brought up here after her.

"This is the one way out, Rod Norton!" she whispered. "The one way out if God is with us."

Her quick fingers sought and found the tiny vial with its small white tablets—labeled "Hyoscin"—and secreted it in her bosom. She was laying fresh twigs upon the blaze when he came back with the coffee can and a tin cup.

She greeted him with another quick smile. He saw that her cheeks were flushed rosily, that there was subdued excitement in her eyes. And yet matters just as they were would sufficiently explain these phenomena without causing him to quest further. He thought merely that he had never seen her so delightfully pretty.

"Virginia Page," he told her as his own eyes grew bright with the new light leaping up into them, "some day——"

"*Sh!*" she commanded, her color deepened. "Let us wait until that day comes. Now you just obey orders; lie there and smoke while I make the coffee."

He would do everything for her but when she insisted, he withdrew to the wall a few feet away, sat down there, filled his pipe and watched her. And while he filled his eyes with her he marveled afresh. For it seemed to him that her mood was one of unqualified happiness. She did all of the talking, her words came in a ceaseless bright flow, she laughed readily and often, her eyes were dancing, the warm color stood high in her cheeks.

That her heart was beating like mad, that the intoxication of an intent he could not read had swept into her brain, that she was vastly more in the mood to weep than to smile—all of this lay hidden to him behind her woman's wit. For, having decided, there would be no going back.

With the coffee boiling in the old black and spoutless pot from Norton's cache in the "treasure chamber," she poured what was left of the ground coffee from its tin to the flat surface of a bit of stone. This tin was to serve Norton as his cup.

"It's to be our nightcap," she laughed at him as she put the improvised cup by the other. "I refuse to sit up any later; a saddle-blanket for bunk and then to sleep. That is my room yonder, isn't it?" She nodded toward the black entrance to the second of the chambers of the King's Palace. "And you will sleep here? Well, while the coffee cools I'm going to make my bed."

She carried her blanket on past him, was gone into the yawning darkness, was back in a moment.

"My bed's ready," she told him gaily. "This kind of housekeeping just suits me! Now for the coffee—Rod Norton, will you do as you are told or not? You are to sit still and let me wait on you; who's hostess here, I'd like to know?"

WHILE out of his sight she had slipped one of the hyoscin tablets into her palm; now, as she poured the ink-black beverage, she let it slip into the tin can which she presented to Norton.

"Don't say it doesn't taste right!" she admonished him in a voice in which at last he detected the nervous note.

He stood up, holding his coffee can in his hand, meeting her strained levity with a deep gravity in his eyes.

"Virginia," he began.

"It's too late to cut in on my monologue!" she cried gaily. "Pledge me in the

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drink I have made for you, Mr. Norton! Just say, 'Virginia, here's looking at you!' Or, 'I wish you well in all that you undertake.' Or, 'For all that you have said to me, for whatever you may say or do in the future, I forgive you!' That's all."

"Virginia," he said gently, "I love you, my dear."

She laughed nervously.

"That's the nice way to say everything all at once!" He saw that her hand shook, that a little of her coffee spilled, and that again she grew steady. "And now our nightcap and good night!"

She drank hurriedly then and having done yawned and made her little pretense of increased drowsiness.

"It's been such a long day," she said. "You'll forgive me if I tumble right straight into sleepyland?"

Again they said good night and she left him, going down among the eery dancing shadows to her own quarter, drawing his moody eyes after her. When she had gone he drew his own blanket to the main entrance of the King's Palace, filled his pipe again and sat staring out into the outer night.

The fire cast up its red flare spasmodically, licked at the last of the dead branches which, rolling apart, burned out upon the rock floor. The darkness once more blotted out all detail saving the few smoldering coals, the knobs of stone in the small flickering circles of light, the quiet form of the man silhouetted against the lesser dark of the night without. Virginia, rigid and motionless at the spot to which she had stolen noiselessly, watched him breathlessly.

For only a little he sat smoking. Then, as though he experienced something of that weariness to which she had made pretense, he laid his pipe aside and stretched out upon his blanket, leaning upon an elbow. She heard him sigh, vaguely made out when he let his head slip down upon an arm, saw that he had grown still, was lying stretched out across the main threshold.

And now she must stand motionless while every fiber of her being demanded action; now she must curb impetuosity to the call of caution. As the seconds passed, all but insupportable in their tedious slowness, she stood rigid and tense, waiting.

But at last she knew that the drug had had its will with him, that he was steeped in deep sleep, that no longer must she wait, that now at length she might act.

Carrying her saddle-blanket she came to him and stood quietly looking down into his upturned face. Now she could let the tears burst into her eyes unchecked, now she could suddenly go down to her knees beside him, for an instant laying her cheek lightly against his in the first caress. Would it be the last? He stirred a little, sighed again. She drew back, still upon her knees again breathlessly rigid. But his stupor clung heavily to him, would hold him thus for hours.

A score of burning questions clamoring in her mind she disposed of briefly, since time was of the essence.

"If I let you have your way, Rod Norton," she whispered, "you will go on from crime to tragedy. If I hand you over to the law I will be betraying you for no end; for your type of man finds the way to break jail, and so force his own hand to further violence. There is the one way out—and God help me to succeed, God forgive me if I fail!"

She stole by him, stepping out upon the outer ledge. She was leaving him helpless—the thought presented itself that she would have another thing to answer for if one of the many men with such cause to hate him should come upon him thus. Well, that was but one of the more remote chances she must take. There was scant enough liklihood that any one should come here before she could race into Las Estrellas and back.

Then it was that she saw Patten. She did not know at first that it was Patten but just that within a few feet of her upon the ledge which she must travel to the steps down a man was standing, his body jerking back, pressed against the rocks as he saw her. She drew back swiftly, her blood in riotous tumult.

But now, above aught else, the one thought in her mind was that there was no time for loitering, that the dawn would come all too soon, that there must be no delay. She stooped quickly and drew from its holster Norton's heavy revolver. Her saddle-blanket over her left arm, the gun gripped in her right hand, she was once more upon the ledge, moving cautiously toward the figure seen a moment ago, gone now.

That it was Patten she knew only when

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she had gone down the steps and had overtaken him there. Retreating thus far, reassured when he had made out that it was the girl alone, he waited for her. And as she demanded nervously, "Who is it?" it was Patten's disagreeable laugh which answered her.

"So," he jeered at her, "this is the sort of thing you do when you are supposed to be out on a case all night!"

Patten here! Had God sent him—or the devil? His insult she passed over, not so much as conscious of anger at it. She was not thinking of herself right now, of convention, of wagging tongues. She was just seeking to understand how this latest incident might simplify or make more complex her problem.

"I've had my suspicions all along," he laughed evilly. "Tonight I followed and made sure. And now, my fine little white dove, what have you to say for yourself?"

Might she use Patten? She was but now on her way to Las Estrellas for aid. She would operate herself, she would take that upon herself, with no more regard for ethics than for Patten's gossiping tongue. She believed that she could do it successfully; at the least she must make the attempt though Norton died under her hand. The right? She had the right! The right because she loved him, because he loved her, because his whole future was at stake.

But she must have assistance so that she submit him to no needless danger, so that she give him every chance to be his under such circumstances as these. She would have brought a man from Las Estrellas, she would have let him think what pleased him, just saying that Norton had met with and accident, that an operation was necessary. And now Patten was here. Could she use him?

"You followed us?" she said, gaining time for her thoughts.

"Yes; I followed you. I saw you come here. I watched while he unsaddled, how he came up to you. What I could not see through the rock walls I could guess! And now——"

"Well, now?" she repeated after him so that Patten must have marveled at her lack of emotion. "Now what?"

"Now," he spat at her venomously, "I think I have found the fact to shut Roderick Norton's blabbing mouth for him!"

"I don't understand——"

"You don't? You mean that he hasn't done any talking to you about me?"

"Oh!" And now suddenly she did understand. "You mean how you are not Caleb Patten at all, but Charles? How you are no physician but liable to prosecution for illegal practising?"

Could she use him or could she not? That was what she was thinking, over and over.

"Where is he?" demanded Patten abruptly, a little suspiciously. "What is he doing? What are you doing out here alone?"

"He is asleep," she told him.

Patten laughed again.

"Your little parties are growing commonplace then!"

"Charles Patten," she cut in coolly, "I have stood enough of your insult. Be still a moment and let me think."

He stared at her; but for a little, his own mind busy, was silent. Could she make use of this blind instrument which fate had thrust into her hand? She began to believe that she could.

"Charles Patten," she went on, a new vigor in her tone, "Mr. Norton knows about all concerning you to make you a deal of trouble. Just how long a term in the State prison he can get for you I don't know. But——"

"Haven't I found the way to shut his mouth!" he said sharply.

"I think not. Before your slanders could travel far we could have found Father José and have been married. But let me finish. You have practised here for upward of two years, haven't you? You have made money, you have a ranch of your own. That is one thing to keep in mind. The other is that more than one of your patients have died. I believe, Charles Patten, that it would be a simple matter to have the district attorney convict you of murder. That's the second thing to remember."

Patten shifted uneasily. And then she knew that it had been God who had sent him. When he sought to bluster she cut him short.

"In the morning, as soon as there is light enough," she said, wondering at her own calmness, "I am going to perform a capital operation upon Mr. Norton. It will be without his knowledge and consent. If he lives and you will give up your practise and retire to your ranch or what business

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pleases you I will guarantee that he does not prosecute you for what has passed. If he dies——"

"If he dies," he snatched the words from her, "it will be murder!"

"You would be free from prosecution," she continued quite as though he had made no interruption. "I rather imagine that I should die too. And, as you say, I would be liable for murder. He is asleep now because I have drugged him. I shall chloroform him before he wakes. I should have no defense in the law courts. Yes, it would be murder."

He drew a step back from her as though from one suddenly gone mad.

"What are you operating for?" he demanded.

"For your blunder," she said simply. "And you are going to help me."

"Am I?" he jeered. "Not by a —— sight! If you think that I am going to let myself in for that sort of thing——"

UNTIL now he had not seen the gun in her hand. Her quick gesture showed it to him.

"Charles Patten," she told him emphatically, "I am risking Mr. Norton's life; I am therefore risking my own. Understand what that means. Understand just what you have got to win or lose by tonight's work. Consider that I pledge you my word not to implicate you in what you do; that if worse comes to worse you could claim and I would admit that you were forced at the point of a gun to do as I told you. Oh, I can shoot straight! And finally, I will shoot straight, as God watches me, rather than let you go now and stop what I have undertaken! Think of it well, Charles Patten!"

Patten, being as weak of mind as he was pudgy of hand, having besides that peculiar form of craft which is vouchsafed his type, furthermore more or less of a coward, saw matters quite as Virginia wished him. Together they awaited the coming of the dawn. The girl, realizing to the uttermost what lay before her, forced herself to rest, lying still under the stars, schooling herself to the steady-nerved action which was to have its supreme test.

Just before the dawn they had coffee and a bite to eat from Norton's little pack. Close to where the drugged man lay they builded a rude low table by dragging the squared blocks of fallen stone from their place by the wall. Upon this Virginia placed the saddle-blankets, neatly folded. Already Patten was showing signs of nervousness; looking into her face he saw that it was white, drawn, but very calm. Patten was asking himself countless questions, many of them impossible of answer yet. She was closing her mind to everything but the one supreme matter.

He helped her give the chloroform when she told him that there was sufficient light and that she was ready. He brought water, placed instruments, stood by to do what she told him. His nervousness had grown into fear; he started now and then, jerking about guiltily as though he foresaw an interruption.

Together they got Norton's inert form upon the folded blankets. Patten's hands shook a little; he asked for a sip of brandy from her flask. She granted it and while Patten drank she cut away the hair from the unconscious man's scalp. Long ago her fingers had made their examination, were assured that her diagnosis was correct. Her hands were as untrembling as the steel of her knife. She made the first incision, drawing back the flap of skin and flesh, revealing the bone of the skull.

For forty-five minutes she worked, her hands swift, sure, capable, unerring. It was done. She was right. The under table of the skull had been fractured; there was the bone-pressure upon the underlying area of brain tissue. She had removed the pressure and with it any true pathological cause of the theft-impulse.

She drew a blindfold about the sleeping eyes. She made Patten bring his own saddle-blanket; it was fixed across the entrance of the anteroom of the King's Palace, darkening it. Then she went to the ledge just outside and stood there, staring with wide eyes out across the little meadow with its flowers and birds and water, down the slope of the mountain, to the miles of desert. She had now but to await the awakening. It was done.

CHAPTER XXII

WHEN Norton stirred and would have opened his eyes but for the bandage drawn over them she was at his side. She had been kneeling there for a long time, waiting. Her hand was on

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his where it had crept softly from his wrist.

"You must lie very still," she commanded gently. "I am with you and everything is all right. There was—an accident. No; don't try to move the cloth; please, Roderick." She pushed his hand back down to his side. "We are in the King's Palace, just you and I, and everything is all right."

He was feverish and she soothed him; sick, and she mothered him and nursed him; troubled, uncertain, perplexed and she comforted him. At the first she went no further than saying that there had been an accident; that already she had sent to San Juan for all that was needed to make him comfortable; that Mr. Engle had been instructed to speed a man to the railroad for further necessities; that now for his own sake, for her sake, he must just lie very still—try not even to think.

He was listless, seeming without volition, quite willing to surrender himself into her keeping. What dazed thoughts were his upon this first awakening were lost, forgotten in the brief doze into which she succeeded in luring him. When again he stirred and woke she was still at his side, kneeling upon the hard rock floor beside him. She had had Patten help her to lift him down from the table before she dispatched Patten with the note for John Engle. Again she pleaded with him to lie still and just trust to her.

He was very still. She knew that he was trying to piece together his fragmentary thoughts and impressions, seeking to bridge over from last night to today. So she talked softly with him, soothing him alike with the tenderness of her voice and the pressure and gentle stroke of her hand upon his hand and arm. He had had an accident but was going to be all right from now on. But he must not be moved for a little. Therefore Engle would come soon and perhaps Mrs. Engle with him. And a wagon bringing a real bed and fresh clean sheets and all of those articles which she had listed. It would not be very long now until Engle came.

But at last when she paused and his hand had shut down upon hers he asked quietly:

"I didn't dream it all, did I, Virginia? It is hard to know just what I did and what I dreamed I did. But it seems more than a dream—was it I who robbed Thompkins of the Quigley mines?"

"Yes," she told him lightly, as though it were a matter of small moment. "But you were not responsible for what you did."

"And there were other robberies? I even tried to steal from you?"

"Yes," she answered again.

"And you wanted to have me submit to an operation? And I would not?"

"Yes."

"And then—then you—you did it?"

So she explained, feeling that certainty would be less harmful to him now than a continual struggle to penetrate the curtain of semi-darkness drawn across his memory.

"I took it upon myself," she told him at the end. "I took the chance that you might die; that it might be I who had killed you. Perhaps I had no right to do it. But I have succeeded; I have drawn you back from kleptomania to your own clear moral strength. You will get well, Rod Norton; you will be an honest man. But I took it upon myself to take the chances for you. Now—do you think that you can forgive me?"

He appeared to be pondering the matter. And when his reply came it was couched in the form of a question:

"Would you have done it, Virginia—if you didn't love me a little as I love you?"

And her answer comforted him. He was sleeping when the Engles came.

Later came the big wagon, one of Engle's men driving, Ignacio Chavez and two other Mexicans accompanying on horseback. Virginia had forgotten nothing. Quick hands did her bidding now, altering the anteroom of the King's Palace into a big airy bedroom. There was a great rug upon the floor, a white-sheeted and counterpaned bed, fresh pajamas, table, chair, alcohol stove, glasses and cups and water pitchers. There were cloths for fresh bandages, wide palm-leaf fans—there was even ice and the promise of further ice to come. The sun was shut out by heavy curtains across the main entrance and the broken-out holes in the easterly wall.

"My dear," said Mrs. Engle, taking both of Virginia's hands into her own, "I don't know just what has happened and I don't care to know until you get good and ready to tell me about it. But I can see by looking at you that you are at the end of your tether. I'm going to take care of Roddy now while you sleep at least a couple of hours."

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She and Engle had asked themselves the question as soon as Virginia's note came to them—

"What in the world were she and Norton doing on the mountainside at that time of night?"

But they had no intention of asking it of any one else. Rather John Engle hastened to answer it for others.

"*Muchachos*," he said to the men when, the wagon emptied and the work done that they could do he sent them back to San Juan, "there was an accident last night. Señor Norton had a fall from his horse, striking his head. My cousin, Miss Page, together with Señor Norton and Señor Patten, was taking a short cut this way to make a call at Pozo. Señor Patten and Miss Page succeeded in getting Señor Norton here where they had to operate upon him immediately. He is doing well now, thanks to their prompt action; he will be well soon. You may tell his friends."

And then, seeing little that he could do here and much that he might accomplish elsewhere, John Engle rode on his spurs back to San Juan to have a talk with Patten.

Throughout the days and nights which followed Virginia and Mrs. Engle nursed Norton back into a semblance of strength. One of them was always at his side while the other rested upon a couch in the adjoining chamber or down in the little meadow among the trees. When at last the bandage might be removed from the blindfolded eyes Norton's questing glance found Virginia first of all.

"Virginia," he said quietly, "thanks to you I can start in all over now."

She understood. So did Mrs. Engle. For Norton had explained to both the banker and his wife, holding nothing back from them, telling them frankly of crimes committed, of his attempted abduction of the girl who in turn had "abducted" him. He had restitutions to make, to make without the least unnecessary delay. He must square himself and he thanked God that he could square himself, that his crimes had been bloodless, that he had but to return the stolen moneys. And, to wipe his slate clean, he stood ready to pay to the full for what he had done, to offer his confession openly, to accept without a murmur whatever decree the court might award him.

Again John Engle did his bit. He went to the county seat and saw the district attorney, a friend of him and of Roderick Norton, an upright man but one who saw clearly. The district attorney laid his work aside and came immediately with Engle to the King's Palace.

"Any court, having the full evidence," he said crisply, "would hold you blameless. Give me the money you have taken; I shall see that it is returned and that no questions are asked. And if you've got any idiotic compunction about keeping your mouth shut—well, think of somebody besides yourself for a change. Try thinking about the 'Wonder Girl' a little; it will be good for you."

For he never called her anything but that, the Wonder Girl. When he had heard everything he came to her after his straightforward fashion and gripped her hand until he hurt her.

"I didn't know they made girls like you," he told her before she even knew who he was. And I don't believe now that they could turn out another!"

It was he who, summoning all of his forensic eloquence, finally quieted Norton's disturbed mind. Norton in his weakened condition was all for making a clean breast before the world, for acknowledging himself unfit for his office, for resigning. But in the end when he was told curtly that he owed vastly more to the county than to his stupid conscience, that he had been chosen to get Jim Galloway, that it was his job, that he could do all the resigning he wanted to after that, and that finally he was not to consider his own personal feelings until after he had thought of Virginia's, Norton gave over his regrets and merely waxed impatient for the time when he could finish his work and go back to Las Flores rancho. For it was understood that he would not go alone.

"I'll free del Rio because I have to, not because I want to," said the lawyer at the end. "Trusting to you to bring him again later. He is one of Galloway's crowd and I know it, despite his big bluffs. Galloway is away right now, somewhere below the border. Just what he is up to I don't know. I think del Rio does. When Galloway gets back you keep your eye on the two of them."

And after the county attorney's departure Rod Norton rested easier. He was making restitution for all that he had done, he was

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getting well and strong again, he had been given such proof as comes to few men of the utter devotion of a woman. Through many a bright hour he and Virginia, daring to look confidently ahead, talked of life as it might be lived upon Las Flores when the lake was made, the lower lands irrigated, the big home designed by them had come into being.

"And," she confessed to him at the last, her face hidden against his breast, "I never want to see a surgeon's lancet again in all of my life, Rod Norton!"

WHEN at length the sheriff could bestride a horse again he wondered impatiently what it could be that kept Jim Galloway so long away? And if he was never coming back? But he knew that high up among the cliffs, hidden away in the ancient caves, Jim Galloway's rifles were still lying.

CHAPTER XXIII

"OH, YOU will all dance and shout together very soon," said Ignacio wisely to his six bells in the old mission garden. "You will see! Captain and the Dancer and Lolita, the Little One, La Golondrina and Ignacio Chavez, all of you together until far out across the desert men hear. For it is in the air that things will happen. And then, when it is all done —why then, *amigos*, who but I is going to build a little roof over you that runs down both ways, to save you from the hot sun and the rains? Oh, one knows. It is in the air. You will see!"

For Jim Galloway had returned, a new Galloway, a Galloway who carried himself up and down the street with bright, victorious eyes and the stride of full confidence, who, at least in the eyes of Ignacio Chavez, was like a blood-lusting lion "screwing up his muscles" to spring. Galloway's return brought to Roderick Norton a fresh vigilance, to Virginia a sleepless anxiety, to Florence Engle unrest, uncertainty, very nearly pure fright.

During the first few days of his absence she had allowed herself the romantic joy of floating unchecked upon the tide of a girlish fancy, dreaming dreams after the approved fashion which is youth's, dancing lightly upon foamy crests, seeing only blue water and no rocks under her. Then, with the potency of the man's character removed with the removal of his physical being, she grew to see the shoals and to draw back from them, shuddering somewhat pleasurably. Now that he was back and that her eyes had been held by his in the first meeting upon the street, her heart fluttered, her vision clouded, she wondered what she would do.

There was to be no lost action in Galloway's campaign now. Within half-a-dozen hours of his arrival there was a gathering of various of his henchmen at the Casa Blanca. Just what passed was not to be known; it was significant, however, that among those who had come to his call were the Mexican, del Rio, Antone, Kid Rickard and a handful of the other most restless spirits of the county. Norton accepted the act in all that it implied to his suspicions and sent out word to Cutter, Brocky Lane and those of his own and Brocky's cowboys whom he counted on.

Galloway's second step, known only to himself and Florrie, was a private meeting with the banker's daughter. It occurred upon the second evening following his return, just after dark among the cottonwoods but a hundred yards from her home. He had made the opportunity with the dispatch which marked him now; he had watched for her during the day, had appeared merely to pass her by chance on the street, had paused just long enough to ask her to meet him.

"I have done all that I planned to do," he announced triumphantly, his eyes holding hers, forcing upon her spirit the mastery of his own. "The power in Mexico is going to be Francisco Villa. I have seen him. Let me talk with you tonight, Florence. History is in the making; it may be you and I together who shape the destiny of a people."

After all she was but a little over sixteen, her head filled with the bright stuff of romance, and he was a forceful man who for his own purposes had long studied her. She came to the tryst, albeit half in trembling, prepared a dozen tremulous times for a fleeing retreat.

Again he was all deference to her. He builded cunningly upon the fact that he trusted her; that he, a strong man put his faith in her, a woman. He flattered her as she had never been flattered, not too subtly, yet not so broadly as to arouse her suspicion of his intent. He spoke quietly at first,

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then his voice seeming charged with his leaping ambition set responsive cords within her thrilling. He pictured to her the State he was going to found, organize, rule, an uncertain number of fair miles stretching along a tropical coast; he made her see again a palatial dwelling with servants in livery, the blue waters of the gulf, the white of dancing sails. He spoke of a peace which was going to be declared between warring factions below the border within thirty days, of the magnificence to be Francisco Villa's, of the position to be occupied by Jim Galloway at Villa's side. His planned development of a gold mine he mentioned merely casually.

And then at length when Florrie was prepared for the passionate declaration he humbled himself at her feet, lifted his hands to her in supplication, told her in burning words of his love. Whether in sober truth he did love her with all of the strength of his nature, whether he but meant to strike through her at John Engle, the richest man of this section of the State, it was for Jim Galloway alone to know. Certainly not for Florrie who listened wide-eyed.

Once she thought that he was about to sweep her up into his arms; they had lifted suddenly from his sides. She had drawn back, crying sharply——

"No, no!"

And he had waited, had again grown deeply deferential, swerving immediately to further vividly colored pictures of life as it might be, of power and pomp, of a secure position from which a man and a woman might direct policies of state, shaping the lives of other men and women.

And in the end of that ardent interview Jim Galloway's caution was still with him, his knowledge of the girl's nature clear in his mind. He did not ask her answer; he merely sought a third opportunity to speak with her, suggesting that upon the next night she slip out and meet him. He would have a horse for her, one for himself; they could ride for a half-hour. He had so much to tell her.

Perhaps a much more important factor than she realized in her action was Florrie's new riding-habit. It had been acquired but three days before and she knew very well just how she looked in it. There would be a moon, almost at the full. The full moon and the new riding-habit were the allies given by fate to Jim Galloway.

Besides all of this, she had not seen Elmer Page for a month. Further, she knew that Elmer had gone riding upon at least one occasion with a girl of Las Palmas, Superintendent Thompkins' daughter. And finally, there lies much rich adventure in just doing that which we know we should leave alone. So Florrie, while her mother and father thought that she had gone early to bed, was on her way to meet Galloway.

THEY rode out of the cottonwood-fringed arroyo just before moonrise, circling the town, Florrie scarcely conscious that they rode north or south. But Galloway knew what he was doing and they rode slowly toward the south. And as they rode, his horse drawn in close to hers, he talked as he had never talked before; his voice rang from the first word with triumphant assurance.

"When he calls she will follow!" Virginia had thought fearfully of them.

Tonight he was calling eloquently, she was following, frightened and yet obedient to his mastery.

Galloway's influence over the girl, that of a strong will over a weak and fluttering one, was quite naturally the stronger when they were alone together. She had always been willing, sometimes a bit eager to make a hero of him; he had long thoroughly understood her. Tonight was the brief battle of wills with him summoning all of his strength, flushed with victory. Abruptly now he urged that she marry him; a moment later his insistent pleading was abruptly tinged with command. He was the arbiter of the hour; he told her of a priest waiting for them at a little village a dozen miles away. They would be married tonight; they were eloping even at this palpitant instant!

When Florence would have stopped, of two balancing minds, he urged the horses on. When she would have procrastinated he beat down her opposition with the rush of his words. And, even while she struggled she was yielding; Galloway was quick to see how her resistance was growing fainter. And all the time, while he spoke vehemently and she for the most part listened in a fascinated silence, they were riding on through the moonlit night. It seemed to her that surely he must love her as few men had loved before.

The village he had promised her was in reality but two poor houses at a cross-roads, inhabited by two Mexican men and

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dowdy women. In the ride of a dozen miles they encountered but one horseman; Galloway turned his own and Florence's animals out so that, though seen, they would not be recognized. At the nearest of the two hovels he dismounted, raising his arms to her. When she cried out and shrank back, trembling, he laughed softly, caught her in his arms and lifted her free of the saddle; when he would have kissed her she put her face into her two hands.

"I—I want to go back!" she whispered. "I am afraid! Please, Mr. Galloway, please let me go home."

Dogs had barked; a man and woman came out. The man laughed. Then he gathered up the reins of the horses and led them to the barn. Florrie, shrinking out of Galloway's embrace, looked particularly little and helpless in her pretty riding-habit.

She went with Galloway into the lamp-lighted room. The woman looked at her curiously, then to Galloway, something of wonder and upstanding admiration in her beady eyes.

"Has the priest come?" demanded Galloway.

"No, señor. Not yet."

She added by way of explanation that word had been sent; that the priest was delayed; a man was dying and he must stay a little at the bedside. She muttered the tale like a child repeating a lesson poorly learned by heart. Galloway, watching Florence who sat rigid in her chair by the table, waited for her to finish.

At the end he gave the woman a sharp, significant look. She said something about a cup of coffee for the señorita and went hastily into the kitchen. Florrie sprang to her feet, her hands clasped.

"You must let me go," she cried wildly. "The priest isn't here. I am going home."

"No," said Galloway, steadily. "You are not going home, Florence. You must listen to me. I love you, more than anything else in the world, my dear. I want you, want you all for mine."

She saw a sudden light flare up in his eyes and it seemed to her that her heart would beat through the walls of her breast.

"I am not a boy but a man. A strong man, a man who, when he wants a thing, wants it with his whole heart and body and soul, a man who takes what he wants. Wait; just listen to me! You love me now; you will love me more and more when I give you all that I have promised you. To-night, in an hour, I will have made the beginning; I will have gathered about me fifty men who will do exactly what I tell them to do! Then they will go with us down into Mexico; they will be the beginning of a little army whose one thought will be loyalty—loyalty to you and to me."

"No," said Florence, her voice shaking. "I am going——"

"You will marry me when the priest comes," he cut in sternly. "Otherwise, if you make me, I will take you with me anyway, unmarried. And I will make you marry me when we have crossed the border. And now—now you will kiss me. I have waited long, Florence."

He came toward her; she slipped behind the table, crying out to him to stop. But he came on, caught her, drew her into his arms. And Florrie, some new passionate, terrified Florrie, beat at him with her fists, tore at him with her nails, hid her face from him and with the agility born of her terror slipped away from him again, again put the table between them. Galloway, a thin line of blood across his cheek, thrust the table aside. As he did so the man came back into the room and stood watching, a twisted smile upon his lips. Galloway lifted his thick shoulders in a shrug and stood staring at the girl cowering in her corner.

"Married or unmarried, you go with me," he told her. "Your kisses you may save for me. Think it over. You had better ask for the priest when I come back." He turned toward the Mexican. "All ready, Feliz?"

The man nodded.

"Tell Castro, then. It's time to be in the saddle."

With no other word to Florrie he went out. But his last look was for her, the look of a victor.

CHAPTER XXIV

CRODERICK NORTON, every fiber of his body alive and eager, his blood riotous with the certain knowledge that the long-delayed hour had come, rode a foam-flecked horse into San Juan shortly after moonrise. Galloway was striking at last, at last might Norton lift his own hand to strike back. As he flung himself down from the saddle he was thinking almost equally of Jim Galloway,

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striking the supreme blow of his career and of Billy Norton whose death had come to him at Galloway's command. Galloway was gathering his forces, had delivered an initial blow, was staking everything upon the one throw of the dice. And he must believe them loaded.

At the clank of spur chain and rowel Struve came hastily into the hallway from his office. He saw the look in the sheriff's eyes and demanded quickly:

"What is it? What's happened?"

There were grim lines about Norton's mouth, his quiet voice had an ominous ring to it.

"Hell's to pay, Julius," he retorted. "And there's little telling where it'll end unless we're on the jump to meet it. Galloway's come out into the open. Kid Rickard and ten men with him, all Mexicans or breeds, crossed over into the next county yesterday, raided the county jail late this afternoon, got poor Roberts, freed Moraga and got away in a couple of big new touring-cars. Every man of them carried a rifle and side arms."

"Killed Roberts, huh?" Struve's frown gathered.

"He's badly hurt if not dead. It was the Kid's work and rather unnecessary, I imagine."

"Sure it's Galloway's work and not just the Kid's?"

"Yes. Only a couple of hours ago a lot of Galloway's crowd were gathering up in the mountains. They've gone to his cache for the rifles. I have sent word for Brocky Lane and his and my cowboys. It begins to look as though he were up to something bigger than we've been looking for. And he's sure of himself, Struve, or he wouldn't have started things by daylight."

Virginia had heard and came into the hallway from her room, her face suddenly white, her eyes filled with trouble. Struve turned back into his room abruptly, going for his rifle.

"You heard?" asked Norton quietly. "It's the big fight at last, Virginia. But we've known it was coming all along."

"Yes, Rod," she said half-listlessly. "I'll be glad when it's all over."

He sketched for her briefly what little more he knew and suspected. Throughout the county where there was telephone communication the wires were buzzing. Over them the word had come to him of Kid Rickard's attack on Roberts and the freeing of Moraga. But in many places the lines were reported "out of order" and towns were isolated. Already men were riding sweating horses, carrying word from him. He knew that del Rio had gathered a crowd of men at Las Vegas; he was certain that del Rio was working hand in glove with Galloway; further that the Mexican had been with Galloway on his recent trip below the border and among the revolutionists.

"They're solid down there," concluded Norton. "What they are up to is something big here, then a dash for safety down there, carrying their booty with them. But we're going to be on time to put a stop to it all. I am going down to see Engle now; will you come with me?"

But before they left the hotel he swore Struve in as a deputy and sent him hastening to carry the word to other men to be counted on. As they passed the Casa Blanca Norton paused a moment, looking in at the wide open door; it was very quiet within, the place seeming deserted.

"No use looking for Galloway here," he said as they went on. "Nor for any of his gang. But, when they come back—unless we head them off——"

Her hand tightened on his arm. She looked up into his thoughtful face with shining eyes.

"You think that they would attempt further robbery and outlawry here?"

"I am going to advise Engle to take the bulk of his money out of the bank, dig a hole and hide it," he answered. "Just to be sure in case we don't stop them."

He knew that he had no time to waste tonight and so, as he and Virginia entered the Engles' living-room, he began immediately, telling the banker what had happened and what he feared was yet to happen. Engle listened gravely.

"Galloway is making his getaway tonight," Norton said by way of conclusion. "For every rifle he has a man. He has no reason to like you and he knows that you carry more money in gold and bank-notes than any other man in the county. The fact that Kid Rickard pulled the game the way he did this afternoon, shooting down Roberts when there was no need of bloodshed, ought to be enough to show us that they are not going to draw the line anywhere this side of old Mexico."

"What are you planning?" asked Engle.

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"I've sent for Brocky and all the men he can bring. They'll all come heeled and ready for trouble, every one sworn in as a sheriff's deputy. I'll get every dependable man in San Juan into the saddle with a rifle inside of half an hour. Before that we'll have further word; or, if not, we ride toward Mt. Temple. I'm taking the gamble so far that that's their rendezvous; that the Kid and his crowd will show up there."

IT WAS unnecessary for him to continue. Engle nodded and went for his rifle. Norton, turning toward Mrs. Engle and Virginia, was shocked by the look he saw in the eyes of the banker's wife.

"Florrie!" gasped Mrs. Engle, her hands gripped in front of her, her face paling. "I thought she was in her room; when I missed her five minutes ago I thought that she had slipped out and run up to the hotel to see Virginia. Virginia hasn't seen her."

Norton smiled and patted the two clasped hands.

"Oh, Florrie'll be all right, Mrs. Engle," he comforted her. "We mustn't get nervous and begin to imagine things, must we?"

But no lessening of that look of fear came into the mother's eyes. Galloway was striking, Florrie was not to be accounted for. Though she turned quickly and went again through the house, the patio and the rear gardens, she was apprehensively certain that she would not find Florence. Virginia came hurriedly to Norton, whispering:

"I'm afraid for her, Rod. I'm afraid! I have seen her and Jim Galloway together, I have known all along that he had an influence over her which he might exert if he wanted to. And, just before Jim Galloway went to Mexico Elmer saw them walk down the street together, stop and talk together under the trees—oh, I'm afraid for her, Rod!"

Engle's face was as white as chalk when a little later he came back into the room with his wife; his two hands were like rock upon his rifle.

"Florence isn't in the house," he announced in a voice which while calm seemed not John Engle's voice. "If she is in San Juan it won't take the half-hour to know it. I'm rather inclined to think that I'm just a fool, Rod Norton. My wife has told me that Galloway was looking at Florence in a way which meant no good. I wouldn't believe. And now, if——"

Norton had no reply to make. Florence's disappearance at such a time meant either a very great deal or nothing whatever. But, as Engle had intimated, it would require but little time to learn if she were in San Juan and safe, and as Norton had said there was no time now to be wasted. Engle would institute inquiries immediately; Norton, his own work looming large before him, would prepare to meet Galloway's latest play.

The sheriff decided promptly that it would be unwise to leave the town absolutely drained of men in whom he could put faith. It was always possible that either the entire crowd of Galloway's men or a smaller detachment might find their way here. Julius Struve, four armed men aiding him, was to be responsible for the welfare of women and children. If Galloway's stroke should turn out to be bolder and harder than was now known, then Struve and his men had horses saddled and were to get their wards out of danger by hard riding. Norton was to post two men a few miles out as he rode north and they were to report back to Struve in case of necessity.

These latter plans were made only at the moment before the sheriff's departure. A man sent by Brocky Lane had raced into San Juan's street, bringing fresh word. It began to appear that Galloway was working in conjunction with aid from below the border. Del Rio with a score of men, Mexicans for the most part who had dribbled into the county during the last few months, was reported to have swept down upon John Engle's ranches, and to be gathering herds of cattle and horses, starting them southward on the run.

Three of Engle's cowboys had been shot down; a similar attack had been delivered upon other ranches. The little town of Las Vegas had been looted, post-office, store and saloon safes dynamited, stock driven off to augment del Rio's other herds. Further, the cowboy sent by Lane reported that a signal-fire had been lighted in the mountains an hour ago and that there had been another fire like an answer leaping up from the desert in the south. Word had also come to Lane that telephone messages hinted that Kid Rickard and his unit were wreaking further outlawry along the county line, headed toward Mt. Temple.

There were seventeen armed horsemen in

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the street waiting for the word from Norton.

"I'll come back to you," he said quietly to Virginia. "Because after what you have done for me, I belong to you—if you want me."

"I want you, Rod," she answered steadily. "And I know that you will come back to me. And now—kiss me good night."

She clung to him a moment, then pushed him from her and watched him swing up into the saddle and ride out among the men who were pledged and sworn to do his bidding. As he did so Engle came to him.

"Going with us, John?" asked Norton.

"No," said Engle. "We haven't found her yet, Rod. I'll try to pick up a trace of her here. And—you'll send a man to me if you find her?"

"Yes," Norton promised.

"And if Galloway has got her——"

"I'll know what to do, John," said Norton gently.

Then, without again looking back, he turned his horse toward the north. The seventeen men, riding two and three abreast, silent and grave for the most part, followed him. The moon shone upon their rifle barrels and made black, grotesque shadows underfoot.

Against the northern sky-line Mt. Temple was lifted sharply outlined; from its crest a leaping flame was stabbing at the stars, a new signal-fire to be seen across many miles.

CHAPTER XXV

STRAIGHT toward that wavering plume of flame in the north they rode swiftly, each man with his own thoughts and with few words. But whether a man thought of Florrie Engle gone or of the shooting of Sheriff Roberts or of the looting of Las Vegas or of a ranch raided, he was like his fellows in that he knew that at last Jim Galloway had come out into the open and that tonight must be Galloway's triumph or Galloway's death. And perhaps he wondered if his own saddle would run empty under the stars before another dawn.

Three or four miles from San Juan Norton made out an approaching rider, one who bent over his horse's mane, racing furiously. The figure, growing rapidly distinct as it drew on from the north, grew erect as the horseman saw Norton's posse. The rider jerked in his horse, paused a moment as though in doubt whether he were meeting friend or foe. Then, when again he came on at the same headlong gallop, Norton recognized him. It was Elmer Page.

"They're fighting back yonder!" cried the boy wildly, his eyes shining with his excitement. "Brocky Lane sent me. I haven't a rifle; who will give me a rifle? I'll give a man a hundred dollars for a rifle!"

"Easy, Elmer," said Norton sharply. "Tell us what Brocky sent you to say. Where are they?"

"Along the arroyo just off to the east of Mt. Temple. About a mile from the mountain—you know where the biggest boulders are all strung out along the arroyo? It's there. Brocky and a lot of cowboys are making a stand there, heading off the Kid and del Rio. So they can't get with the others, you know. Why didn't somebody tell me about this?" he broke off, his voice shrill. "I haven't a rifle, just a cursed revolver. Who will——"

Again Norton interrupted sternly.

"Let's have it straight, Elmer," he commanded. "Brocky and his men are along the arroyo, you say? And they're trying to keep between del Rio and the Kid's crowd and the other crowd? Some of the others are still on the mountains then?"

"The mountain is full of them. They're pouring down and shooting as they come; Brocky's in between——"

"How many men are with him?"

"About twenty. But—my God! Rickard's men and del Rio's are shooting from the east and the others are shooting from the west—poor Old Tommy Rudge got shot in the stomach and Denny Blain is down and——"

"Del Rio and Rickard didn't come in machines, did they?"

"No. Brocky said tell you they'd left their cars, sent them on filled with loot toward the south where a lot of other greasers are waiting for them; then the Kid and del Rio and about fifty men altogether started a big herd of horses and cattle this way. Brocky tried to stampede the herds but the others are more than two to one so he got his men in the arroyo and they're giving 'em —— from there."

"Galloway's on the other side?"

"No. Brocky said tell you Galloway hadn't shown up yet. We think he didn't expect things to get started so soon. One of Brocky's men riding in a little while ago

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from the other side of San Juan thought that he had seen Galloway and some one that looked like a girl riding with him toward the old cross-roads where the Denbar place used to be. Brocky thinks maybe you can come in and head Galloway off and bust up the whole play that way."

So Galloway and "some one who looked like a girl," had ridden toward the old Denbar cross-roads! And Galloway had not yet joined his forces.

"Elmer," said Norton quickly, "ride on to San Juan. Tell John Engle what you have told me about Galloway. Tell him——"

"I won't!" cried Elmer, on the verge of hysteria. "I won't do it. Do it yourself; send some one else. I want to go with you; I want a rifle, I tell you! Didn't I see Tommy Rudge go down with a bullet in his belly? Didn't I see Denny when the Kid shot him?"

Norton laid a hand on Elmer's arm, speaking quietly.

"Listen, Elmer," he said. "We will do what we can where Brocky is. But that isn't all of the devilment tonight. Galloway got Florrie away somehow; she was the one riding with him toward the cross-roads. It's up to you to ride on and ride like the devil and tell John Engle. Come on, boys!"

Elmer sagged in his saddle suddenly as though he had been struck a heavy physical blow.

"Galloway got Fluff!" he muttered dully.

His gaze trailed along after the departing posse. Norton on his big roan was setting the pace, the steady swinging gallop to eat up the miles swiftly and yet not kill the horses before the journey's end. The others followed him, stringing out single-file to take advantage of the trail. The moon picked them out with clear relief, a grim line of retribution. And yet the boy, while his eyes wandered after them, saw only little Fluff struggling in Jim Galloway's arms.

Then suddenly he, too, was riding but at a pace which took no heed of a horse's endurance, riding a gallant brute that stretched out its neck and with flaring nostrils beat out the very staccato of urgent speed upon the flying sands. Already his revolver was tight-clenched in a lifted hand. Already he had swerved a little from the distant lights of San Juan. He was taking the shortest line which led to Denbar's cross-roads.

"Galloway's got Fluff," he said over and over, choking on the words.

AN HOUR later Norton heard the first spitting of rifles. Another fifteen minutes of shod hoofs hammering through the broken hills and he saw the first spurts of flame cutting through the shadows where the trees clung to the arroyo. As he drew in his horse the men behind him closed up about him. He threw out his arm, pointing.

"Brocky's boys must be right down there," he said sharply. "The Kid and del Rio will be yonder; those are their horses. Young Page says there are about fifty of them."

A fusilade of rifle shots interrupted him. Along a fifty or sixty yard front the Kid's and del Rio's men, had crept in closer to Brocky's arroyo, worming their way upon their stomachs, and now fired together. There came a rattling reply from the creek, the shouting of cowboys.

"We'll take those fellows first," ordered Norton quickly. "They will see us when we climb that little rise. Spread out; go easy until we get to the top. Then, boys, let's see who can give them hell first and fastest."

They looked to their rifles for the last time and rode slowly up the short slope of the low-lying ridge. Then, as the first man topped it there came a shout from the shadows in front, another shout, and the whizzing of rifle balls. Norton used his spurs then; his big roan leaped forward and was racing down the further slope; his men in a long line rode with him. And as he rode he lifted his own gun and poured his lead into the thickest of the shadows.

A wild shout of cheering broke from the arroyo; rifle barrels grew hot in hot hands. On through the bright moonlight came the sheriff's posse, some of them firing as they rode, others saving their lead. To be seen from afar now, they drew many a shot toward themselves. And yet the target of a man riding swiftly over uneven ground and in the moonlight is not to be found over readily by questing lead. When Norton called to his men to stop and dismount, taking advantage of a row of scattered boulders, not a saddle was empty.

Every man as he dismounted threw his horse's reins to the ground; the animals

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might bolt or they might not; some of them might not stop for many a mile, others would be found a hundred yards away. But they must all think less of that now than of what lay in front of them.

"That you, Norton?" came a cheery voice booming suddenly through the silence which had shut down as the newcomers disappeared among the boulders.

"Here, Brocky!" shouted Norton. "All right down there?"

"Pretty well," called Brocky. "They've winged three or four of us—they're rotten shots, Roddy. We've popped over a dozen of them."

There were other shouts then, tenor Mexican voices for the most part with the Kid's unmistakable snarl running through them. Men were calling in Spanish to their fellows across the arroyo. Whatever it was that Brocky was trying to say was lost in the din. And then again came a volley of rifle shots. Norton rose slowly to his feet, studying the situation with frowning eyes. A bullet hissed high over head, another cut by his side, another went shrieking off into the night. But while they whined in his ears he laid his rude plans.

The arroyo wound and twisted this way and that through the broken uplands. Where Brocky Lane had placed his men so as to defy the union of the two bands of outlaws it described a wide rude arc curving about the spur from Mt. Temple. Here the cowboys, with some twenty or thirty feet separating each man from his nearest fellow, were extended along a line which must be about two hundred yards long. The Mexicans to the eastward, where del Rio and Kid Rickard and Moraga were, were bunched in the protecting shadows of a field of boulders such as those where the sheriff's men lay.

"We could stick here all night and get nothing done," said Norton to the men close to him. "Rickard's gang could have charged down on Brocky long ago if they'd had the stomach for that sort of thing. They've got the numbers on us; they more than had the count on Brocky's outfit; with those Jaspers on the mountain-side they could have turned the trick. But that sort hasn't the desire for a scrap unless they can pull it from behind a rock. And, by the same token, they won't last five minutes in the face of a charge. Get me?"

"But the ginks on the mountain will pick us off pretty lively as we hit the trail down the slope here," said a thoughtful voice.

Then Norton explained further. He meant to eliminate the other crowd; it could be done. When he gave the word every man was to jump to his feet and make the first half of his charge the bloodless one down into the arroyo toward Brocky Lane. Then, Norton's men and Brocky's united, they could surge up the creek's banks and make their flying attack, coming in between the two other factions so that the men on the mountain must hold their fire or kill as many of their own crowd as of the others.

The suggestion was accepted without discussion. When Norton said "Ready," they were ready; when he sprang to his feet and ran down toward the arroyo they ran with him. A shout of laughter went up from each side of the dry watercourse as jeering voices announced triumphantly that the gringos were afraid. And with the shouts came rifle shots.

But to the last man of them they reached the arroyo safely and, ducking low, trotted on to join the cowboys. In a moment more Norton had found Brocky Lane, had explained his plan, had had Brocky's silent nod for an answer. In quiet voices the men passed the word along the line. Those from the further end drew in closer so that their whole body of something better than thirty men occupied but a brief section of the arroyo.

"Get your wind first, boys," Norton admonished them. "Better fill your clips, too, while you've got the chance. And count on using a six-gun before you're through. All right? Let's show 'em the sort of a scrap a gringo can put up."

Then again they were running, the unwavering line of thirty men but with a difference which the outlaws might not mistake. And as they ran they held their fire for a little, knowing how useless and suicidal it would be to pause half-way. But presently they were answering shot with shot, pausing, going down upon one knee, taking a moment's advantage of a friendly rock, pouring lead into the agitated groups among the boulders, springing up, running on again, every man fighting the fight his own way, the thirty of them making the air tingle with their shouts as they bore onward.

Then it was man to man and often enough one man to two or three, dark forms struggling, men striking with clubbed guns, men

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snatching at their side-arms, going down, rising or half-rising, firing as long as a charge was in a gun or strength in a body. And as they fired and struck and called out after the fashion of the cowboy in a scrimmage the body of men before them wavered and broke and began to fall back.

Norton swung his clubbed empty rifle up in both hands and beat down a man firing at him with a revolver. All about him were struggling forms and he was sore beset now and then to know who was who. A fierce mustachioed, black-browed man thrust a rifle to his breast and pulled the trigger and screamed out his curses as Norton put a revolver bullet through him. A slender, boyish form sprang up upon a rock recklessly, training his rifle upon Brocky Lane. It was the Kid.

But the Kid had met a man quicker, surer than himself and Brocky had fired first. Rickard spun and fell. Norton saw him drop but lost sight of him before the body struck the earth. He had found del Rio; del Rio had found him.

Two smoking revolvers were jerked up, two guns spoke through the clamor as one gun. The men were not ten feet apart as their guns spoke. Norton felt a bullet rip along his outer arm, the sensation that of a whiplash cutting deep. He saw del Rio stagger back under the impact of a forty-five caliber bullet which must have merely grazed him since it did not knock him off his feet.

Del Rio, his lips streaming his curses and hatred, fired again. But his wound had been sorer than Norton's, his aim was less steady and now as he gave back it was to fall heavily and lie still.

It had lasted less than five minutes.

"It's Jim Galloway's fight and Galloway don't come " some one had shouted.

They broke again, gave back and back—and then were running, every man of them scenting defeat and much worse than defeat unless he came to a horse before another five minutes. And after them, firing now as they ran, came Brocky's cowboys and Norton's men.

"They've got all of their horses over there together," yelled Brocky into Norton's ear. "The horses for those ginneys who have been hiding out in the mountains, too. That's why I cut in between them that way. Now if we can only scatter their cayuses—why, Roddy, we'll have every —— one of 'em afoot to be rounded up when we get ready!"

And Brocky, limping as he went, had raced along after the others.

But Norton did not follow. His eyes had gone to the horses which he and the San Juan men had left beyond the little line of boulders. And, traveling that way, he had seen a lone horseman far off to the south, a horsemen riding frantically, seeking to come to the lower slopes of Mt. Temple.

CHAPTER XXVI

"GALLOWAY!"

It seemed almost as though some great voice had shouted it to him through the din. Yonder, riding on his spurs, come at this late moment, was Jim Galloway. The man responsible for all of tonight's bloodshed, for the disappearance of Florrie, for the death of Billy Norton.

"Coming, Jim Galloway!"

Did he say it? Or again was it a voice shouting to him, urging him on. He looked off to the east. Flying forms everywhere with other racing forms pursuing, firing as they ran. Horses jerking back, rearing, breaking away from the few men guarding them. Full defeat for Jim Galloway there. But to the west? Galloway coming on at top-speed, shouting as he came, and, upon the mountain's lower slope the others of Galloway's men, armed and blood-thirsty. If Galloway came to them, whipped them with his tongue, stirred them with his magnetism—why, then, the fight was all to be fought over.

Now again Norton, too, was running, bearing down upon the straggling horses. He caught up the first dragging reins to lay his hand to, swung up into the saddle, measured swiftly the distance between Galloway and the men on the mountain—and used his spurs.

On came Jim Galloway, his wide, heavy shoulders not to be mistaken in the rich moonlight, his hat gone, his head up, a rifle across the saddle in front of him. Norton lost sight of him as he swept down into the bed of the arroyo; caught sight of him again from the further side. Already Galloway was appreciably nearer his men, driving his horse mercilessly.

"If he comes to his crowd before I can stop him," was Norton's thought, "he'll put

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his game across on us yet. I've got to head him off and take the chances."

Nor were the odds to be overlooked. Galloway was still too far away to be stopped by a rifle ball and Norton, heading him off, would expose himself not only to Galloway's fire but to that of the men who were moving to a lower slope to meet their leader. And yet, with fate in the balance, here was no time for hesitation.

Now Galloway had seen him, had recognized him perhaps, the thought coming naturally to him that it would be Roderick Norton who rode to cut him off. He shifted his rifle so that his right hand was on the grip, the barrel caught in his left; he had dropped his horse's reins. Norton was slipping a fresh clip into his gun, his own reins now upon his horse's neck. And now both men knew that unless a bullet stopped him Norton would cut across Galloway's path before he could come to his men.

"At him, Roddy, old boy! We're coming!"

Norton glanced over his shoulder and pressed on. Brocky had missed him, had seen, had called back a half-dozen of his men and was following. Well, if he dropped maybe Brocky and the others could get Jim Galloway. It really began to look as though Galloway had played out his string.

They were firing from the mountain-side now, the bullets thus far flying wild of their rushing target. Norton shook his head and urged his horse to fresh endeavor. In a moment he would be fairly between Galloway and Galloway's last chance. His eye picked out the spot where he would dismount at that moment, a tumble of big boulders. He would swing down so that they would be between him and the mountain, so that nothing but moonlit open space lay between him and Jim Galloway.

While rifles cracked and spat fire and sprayed lead over him and about him he rode the last fifty yards. He reached the boulders, set his horse up, threw himself from the saddle and with his back to the rock, his face toward Galloway, he lifted his rifle. Galloway, almost at the same instant jerked in his own horse. He was so close that Norton caught his cry of rage.

"Hands up, Galloway!" cried the sheriff. "Hands up or I'll drop you."

But at last Galloway had come out into the open, at last there was no subterfuge to stand forth at his need, at last, gambler that he was, he accepted the even break of man to man. And as Norton's voice rang out Galloway fired.

He shot twice before Norton pulled the trigger. Norton shot but the once. Galloway dropped his rifle, sat rigid a moment, and toppled from the saddle. And his men, seeing him go down, cried out to one another and drew back into the mountain cañons.

"FUNNY thing," said Brocky Lane afterward. "Had the picture of a kid of a girl in his pocket! Must have carted it around for a year. Old Roddy's bullet tore right square through it."

It was a picture of Florrie Engle, taken years before. As Brocky said, "Just a kid of a girl." Where he got it nobody knew. But then there were other things about Jim Galloway which no one knew. Perhaps—*Quien sabe!*

DURING the late hours of the night and the following forenoon the thing was ended. Sheriff Roberts' deputies with a posse in automobiles had raced southward, intercepting those other cars hurried toward the border by the Kid and del Rio. Brocky Lane with a score of men had swept down upon the stolen herds, scattered them, fired fifty shots, emptied some three or four saddles and sent the escaping rustlers flying toward the Mexican line. Singly and in small groups other men, farmers, cowboys, miners and the dwellers of small settlements, joined with Norton's men giving battle to those of Galloway's crowd who had drawn back into the fastnesses of Mt. Temple.

In the afternoon Norton, with the aid of a handful of cowboys from Brocky's outfit and from Las Flores, escorted fifteen anxious-faced prisoners to the county seat where jail capacity was to be taxed. And night had come again, serene and peaceful with the glory of the moon and stars, when he rode again into San Juan, sore and saddle-weary.

At the hotel he learned that Virginia had gone to the Engles'. He left his jaded horse with Ignacio and walked down the street. In front of the Casa Blanca he stopped a moment, staring musingly at the solid adobe walls gleaming white in the moonlight. The place was quiet, deserted. No

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single light winked at him through door or window. It seemed to him to be brooding over the passing of Jim Galloway.

He found Florrie and Elmer strolling under the cottonwoods. They had scant interest in him, little time to bestow upon a mere mortal. Florrie could only cry ecstatically that Black Bill was a hero! He, all alone, had terrorized the Mexican woman guarding her, had saved her, had brought her back. And Elmer could only look pleased and stammer and whisper to Fluff to be still.

Virginia had heard his voice, the voice she had been listening for throughout so many sleepless hours, and met him before he had come to the door.

"Oh, thank God, thank God!" she cried softly. "But—you are hurt?"

He forgot his wound as both arms closed about her. From somewhere at the rear of the house he heard Mrs. Engle's voice, crying eagerly—

"It's Roddy!"

She was hurrying to greet him. What he had to say must be said briefly.

"My work is done," he said quickly. "I have put in my resignation this afternoon. They can get a new sheriff. I am going to be a rancher, my dear. And, Virginia——"

He was whispering to her, his lips close to her hair. And Virginia, though her face was suddenly hot with the flush mounting to her brow, gave him steadily for answer—

"Whenever you wish, Rod Norton!"

SO IT was only twenty-four hours later that Ignacio Chavez stood in the old mission garden and made his bells talk, just the three upon the western arch, the Little One, La Golondrina and Ignacio Chavez, the golden-throated trio that tinkled to the touch of his cunning hand and seemed to laugh and sing and proclaim the gladdest of glad tidings. Then Ignacio drew his enrapt gaze earthward from the full moon and made out a man and a girl riding out into the night, riding toward the Ranch of the Flowers. And he made the bells laugh again.

"And tomorrow," vowed Ignacio solemnly, "not later than tomorrow or the day thereafter, you shall have your reward, *amigos*. You have told the world of heavy doings; you have rung for Jim Galloway dead; you have made the music for the wedding of el Señor Nortone. And it shall be I who will make a little roof like a house over you. You will see!"

THE END

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HELLUVANOTE

by
ROY P. CHURCHILL

Author of "The Frayed Strand," "Pay-Day," etc.

IT ALL happened because "Quince" Harper and Patrick Knott, senior forecastle members of the coast defense battle-ship *Franklin*, decided to change their luck by going to church.

"It's been close on to two year," complained Knott, pointing at his crony with a calloused finger. "No wonder things is happenin' to you. No self-respectin' seafarin' man ought to put it off longer than a year."

"Happenin' to me!" snorted Quince Harper. "Haven't you spoiled a good suit of clothes, broke your best pipe, been reprimanded for swearin' by a pink-necked midshipman, and just come out of the brig for being caught takin' a nip of doctored shellac?"

"Huh!" retorted Knott. "Look what's happened to you! Overboard! Cleaned out last pay-day at poker! Lost your rate again for triflin' with the new first lieutenant before you got acquainted!"

"All that and a lot more," sighed Quince Harper. "We'd better go, Knott. I'm afraid to put it off."

"You're right, Quince, and we want to go somewheres where the medicine is strong. No other kind is goin' to do any good."

So it was that the two old seamen sat in a warm, contented glow under the burning words of Ephraim Hepplewhite, the little mission preacher, and his big sermon, "The Wages of Sin." Before this they had tried a big, fashionable up-town church, where a startled usher had shown them deferentially to a cushioned pew, and where they had listened first in anticipation and then in keen disappointment, to the perfectly balanced choir under its musical dirctor, an anthem, a long-winded prayer, like a cold and formal Sunday morning inspection, and then to the poetry-quoting, broad A attempt of the minister not to let any of the raw Gospel escape from its sugar coating.

Knott and Harper looked at each other as they walked out. It was enough. In the state they were in, they dared not criticize, yet they both knew that this experience would never change their luck, would never change anybody's luck, and then Arvel Bonham had steered them to the little mission where without preface or feinting the preacher had taken his subject red hot and struck straight at them with it.

They sat forward eagerly on the plain hard benches, drinking in every word like so much scalding, fiery brandy to their thirsty souls. Unconsciously they gripped hands. This was the real stuff. They were purged, flayed alive, and happy.

"The wages of sin is—" bellowed the preacher, and was interrupted by a violent sneeze, drowning out the last words.

Knott and Harper looked at the offender ominously, but Arvel Bonham laughed. Half a dozen others joined him. The spell was broken. Glaring the two old sailors turned on them. Ephraim Whipplewhite concluded, and started down the aisle.

"Hasn't he got the goods, though!" whispered Arvel Bonham, unconscious of how far he was in the wrong. "They call him Old Pepper-and-Salt."

The little minister, all abristle, was before them.

"I have seen you before, young man, but nothing I have said has seemed to reach you.

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If you ever disturb this meeting again, I'll call a policeman."

"Yes, sir," gulped Bonham, "I didn't mean any harm."

He was surprised and embarrassed at being singled out in the crowd for the preacher's wrath.

The Reverend Ephraim, like a true scrapper in any cause, followed up his advantage.

"The wages of sin is death, young man, and you keep away from this place unless you intend to take seriously what it teaches."

Harper and Knott nodded their approval. Bonham retreated toward the door with the Reverend Ephraim following, pouring in solid shot at each step. Then came an interruption. The organist, a surprisingly pretty girl, came quickly down the cleared aisle and plucked at the minister's sleeve. He turned abruptly, and, she being as tall as he, leaned over and whispered in his ear.

"Yes, daughter," said the minister, a little impatiently, as if he were anxious to get back to the job of searing Bonham.

But the girl was insistent. She not only plucked at the sleeve, she held the arm. She whispered more. Out of the tail of his eye the Reverend Ephraim saw that Bonham had made his escape to the doorway.

"Certainly, daughter, certainly," the minister yielded. "I didn't know he brought them," and in a moment he had overtaken the three sailors, caught in a momentary jam at the door. "I'm glad you came," he said, shaking hands, his voice the tone of all preachers at the doorways of their churches. "Come again. Bring your friends."

Bonham hardly heard him. He mumbled something which the Reverend Ephraim mistook for embarrassment, but the young sailor's eyes were on the girl and a resolution was forming. It was her presence that had brought him into the little mission time after time. Many of the Reverend Ephraim's thunderous appeals had gone hurtling over his head, while he watched her slim fingers on the keys, and the mass of red-bronze hair coiled low on her neck.

He could look at her this way as long as he wished, while he could not stare when she faced him. So far he had not spoken to her, and she had seemed not to notice him, except for the one rather impersonal smile of thanks the night he had gotten up to give a woman with a baby his seat. Now the wonder had happened. She had come to his rescue, had interceded for him with her peppery father, had even noticed that he had brought Harper and Knott with him.

"I forgot something," he said, with sudden boldness, and stepped by the preacher, catching up with the girl half-way down the aisle, on her way back to the organ.

"Thank you for helping me out," he said abruptly.

It was the girl's turn to be confused. She had stolen more than one glance at the good-looking sailor before tonight. Now their eyes met in a swift glance, and the girl turned hers aside first.

"Father is excitable, you mustn't mind him."

"I don't. I'll be back tomorrow," and content for the present with this victory, Bonham hurried off down the aisle to join his friends.

AFTER this Bonham was not content merely to look at the back of Rose Hepplewhite's neck. He was ashore as often as the first-class men of the *Franklin* were allowed, walked home with the girl from the mission, called at the house, and became in the eyes of the Reverend Ephraim first a nuisance, and then a menace, for any one with half an eye could see that Arvel Bonham was serious, and he paid court to the girl in a far different way from the paler, spectacled young men of almost neuter gender whom so far it had been Rose Hepplewhite's lot to entertain.

Also at this time the Reverend Ephraim had other troubles, which diverted his mind from the management of his family. There was a debt on the mission building, and he must raise the money, or lose the property. Interests whose business the mission damaged were against him. It behooved him to fight a good fight, and concentrate solely on the big object. Then, coming home with his mind full of figures, trying to make three by some legerdemain of finance become five, he caught Arvel Bonham and his daughter Rose kissing in the hall.

The Reverend Ephraim was quick-witted and combative. As his daughter disengaged herself from the young sailor's arms figures were swept from his mind instantly. This thing must be broken up at once.

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"Just step in here a moment, daughter," he said evenly, opening the door to the small room which he used as a study.

Bonham followed. With the cocksureness of youth in love, he did not mind facing anybody, was rather glad to have it over. If the older man meant to bawl out the girl, he would not sneak off and let her take it alone. But just as the Reverend Ephraim had neglected home affairs to raise money for his church, Bonham had concentrated on winning the girl, and ignored the father. To just this extent his education had been neglected.

Old Pepper-and-Salt Hepplewhite was not to be overlooked in any matter that concerned him. It took him less time to reduce the girl to tears and Bonham to despondency than it did to deliver a sermon, and Bonham was out-generaled, out-talked, and outmaneuvered, and started back to his ship with the world reeling about his ears. The Reverend Ephraim had thrown him down so hard that he was stunned, crushed, inert.

At the Navy Yard gate he met Patrick Knott and Quince Harper and fell dejectedly into step.

"Whose funeral you been to?" asked Knott.

"My own," came the sullen answer.

"Thought so," smiled Knott. "Must be bad to have some white-collared psalm-singin' little runt beat your time."

"Beat whose time? I'm solid with that girl as judgment day."

"What're you grouchy about, then?" demanded Quince Harper. "You started ashore this mornin' like somebody had just left you a million dollars."

"Million dollars!" repeated Bonham. "Wish I knew where I could get a couple of hundred. I'd show the old heathen."

"So it's old Pepper-and-Salt?"

"Sure. Who'd you think it was? Pancho Villa?"

"Ain't he sweet and pleasant to his old friends?" said Knott to Harper, and then turned chidingly on Bonham. "Come on and spill it out of your system. What's the old he-saint been doin' to you? You act as if he'd bit his initials in your neck."

It helped Arvel Bonham to talk, and since the two old sailors had seen at least the first part of his courtship, and knew all concerned, he felt it no disrespect to the girl to talk to them. Quickly he outlined what had happened, and dwelt on his overconfidence in the parson's study.

"I tried to argue with him, tried to show him that a sailor is a human being, even if he don't dress like one, but there was nothing doing. Talking is his game, and I was outclassed about as far as he would be if he tried to hang up a perfect score with the twelves. He said that sailors were wild, unreliable, had a sweetheart in every port, and that nobody he was kin to could have anything to do with them.

"Rose tried to head him off by crying on his neck, but you know how he is when he gets going. I doubt if a deck hose would cool him. The only thing he couldn't do was run me off under fire. I hung on until he quit shooting. Then he made Rose give me back my ring. He thinks the ship will be sailing soon. But I'll fool the old bird."

"How?" Knott's question was half-sympathy and half-bewilderment. "You've got nothin' saved up to get married on, even if you'd worked the old man for a blessing."

"Don't I know that?" said Bonham irritably. "I tried to tell him, but he wouldn't listen. Rose and I planned to save every cent until I was paid off next year, and then get the job ashore that's already been promised me."

"What do you want with money now, then?"

"There's a debt on the mission. One of his bawl-outs was that if I had any real manhood in me, I'd be helping him get this money, instead of hindering the cause by making love to his daughter. I'd like to show the old sin-doctor that even a sailor can raise a little wad of money, if he puts his mind to it."

"He wouldn't take it if you'd get it," said Quince Harper shrewdly.

"He'd grab it even from me. He's hard up and told Rose he'd tried everything. There's a bunch after him trying to close him up."

This was enough for Harper and Knott. One good turn deserved another. Bonham had led them to the Reverend Ephraim and the fiery little preacher had given them a message which warmed their souls. Now both were in trouble and they pledged themselves to aid.

But as the days passed, Arvel Bonham and his friends, and the Reverend Ephraim Hepplewhite, each sought in vain in his

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own way to raise the money. On the one hand there were many causes which split up the available sources of income, and vigorous opposition which prevented even some of the money so intended from reaching the little mission, while the sailors found themselves unable to borrow or beg, and the ship stony broke with pay-day still a week off.

The two old sailors cudgeled their brains for a way out.

It seemed to them that the fiery little preacher who had given them a real sermon would be helped even more than Bonham if they could raise the money. Yet they were apparently taking the other side and working with all their might so that Bonham could get the best of the Reverend Ephraim. They knew this, and chuckled over it at their pipes. But with all of Bonham's confidence, their scheming, and the worthiness of the cause, there came no result.

Then as a last resort, they came again to the little mission church. Bonham was not with them. In fact, they had not asked him, for the visit was the result of a suggestion by Quince Harper, and being in a mood to try anything, they slipped away by themselves.

"We need another dose," Quince had said. "The other two put us safe inside the harbor out of bad luck, because nothin' has happened to us since, but we've got to get another to bring us to anchor. We're driftin' yet."

And so it was, as they came from the mission, still in a warm glow from a new lambasting, Mrs. Anna Wright Green, in search of a new way to spend her money, caught sight of them as they hesitated under the bright light of the doorway. Mrs. Anna Wright Green was on her way home from the theater. Two weeks before the two sailors had occupied a pew just in front of her at the fashionable church which she helped support.

They had not seen her, but she had seen them. They had sought a message and failed to get it, but she had received hers. To her here were two poor lonely souls seeking comfort, and she couldn't get the picture of their faces out of her mind. Curiously enough, she was thinking of them as she drove by the mission, wondering how she could help. The country seemed drifting toward war, and these men would be in the front rank. Then she saw them and had an inspiration.

"Call those two men," she directed the chauffeur and a moment later Knott and Harper, holding their flat caps clutched to their sides, stood on the edge of the pavement beside the shining car.

The kindly shadows hid a part of their embarrassment.

"I would like to have a little talk with you two men," Mrs. Wright Green was saying. "Could you spare me half an hour?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Knott, and as if the words were those mumbled over a charm, they entered the perfumed interior of the roomy machine, were whisked with the easy bound of well-oiled springs before a palace of stone and brick, and at last found themselves in a high-ceiled room of many shaded lights where Mr. Wright Green, directed by Mrs. Wright Green, handed them cigars from a box.

"NOW," opened up Mrs. Green, smiling contentedly at her captives as she settled her ample form into an upholstered chair. "What is the one big thing that you men need aboard your ships? A lot of people have gone in for Sailors' Rests, amusements, lodging-houses, restaurants, but all of this work is done on shore. What can be done for you men while you are on duty in the long watches of the night, the dreary days between ports, the—oh, you know what I mean I am sure."

"Yes, ma'am," answered Knott a little hurriedly, for he could see the words "A nip o' grog in the mornin' coffee" forming themselves on Harper's lips. "I do know what you mean. It's plum' distressin'. Did you have any idears your own self, ma'am?"

Exceedingly tactful was Patrick Knott. Mrs. Wright Green did have an idea. What to her was a big idea. A beat. A chance to put one over on her social rivals. Thus encouraged she rushed in, leaving Patrick Knott and Quince Harper to sit in silence, get accustomed to the big room and their strange surroundings, and to sit back in their deep chairs finally, with their minds working normally, which if Mrs. Wright Green could have then grasped it, was a dangerous situation if she expected to exploit the two old sailors solely for her own advantage.

"Now my idea," explained Mrs. Wright

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Green, "is to provide a lounging-room or smoking-room on board the ship," and then she drew a word picture of comfortable chairs, tables piled high with magazines, desks full of writing material, soft rugs, pictures, pinochle and checker-boards by the score.

Early in the recital Quince Harper had started to speak, and had been silenced by a look from his companion, so that without interruption Mrs. Wright Green went on and enjoyed herself, regardless of the fact that such a place aboard ship was impossible, for a hundred good reasons, two of which being that the sailors, even off watch, had no time to spend in such a room, and that a war-ship has not a square inch of space which is not already used for some vital necessity.

"There ought to be a smoking-lamp," suggested Knott, and after its use was explained, one was added, done in bronze with copper trimmings held by a triangle of chains from the ceiling.

"And a steam jet to clean pipes," was Quince Harper's contribution, ignored by Mrs. Wright Green as she went on more to the point.

"What I want to know, is how to install this idea aboard ship, and of course your help with the details of its working out." Mrs. Wright Green seldom trifled with details. "For instance, I'll ask you to get your captain's permission, and also work out a scheme by which the men may take their proper turns, for I realize that with so many men they could not all use the lounging-room at once.

"That'll be easy," said Knott. "Leave that to me. We'll issue passes, and make 'em take turns."

"Fine," agreed the benefactress. "How much money do you think it would take?"

"Two hundred dollars," said Knott promptly. "I've been figuring as we went along. It'll take about that, even with what the boys chip in, and free work."

He was watching Mrs. Wright Green for signs of panic and Quince Harper was watching him as if his old friend were crazy. But Knott went right on—

"Before you give us the money, maybe you'd better come out to the ship and see if we belong there and help pick out a billet for the place."

"Perhaps I could interest the officers as well," said Mrs. Green, still in an enthusiastic fervor over her project.

This was Knott's supreme danger and he handled it with skilful diplomacy. To oppose vehemently was to arouse suspicion and yet Mrs. Wright Green must by all hazards by kept away from the officers.

"Gobs, ma'am—that is flat-feet, ma'am; sailors — they don't want meddlin' from aft. Their business and officers' business better be kept separate. I knowed once on a ship, when the captain come messin' 'round the galley and loaned us his steward to help out on a feed, that the thing turned out punk—that is bad, ma'am. Half of us fellows couldn't eat the grub after it was cooked. Besides that, the officers already got a place to smoke and play checkers. It's the wardroom. They eat there too. It's only us fellows forward that's really neglected."

Mrs. Wright Green was satisfied. These men were childlike in some things and of course must be humored. The next day, guarded carefully from outside interference by Harper and Knott, she visited the ship and was shown a chalk-marked square on the gun-deck occupied three times a day by the mess tables and during target practise and battle with ammunition, which the sailors claimed was an ideal spot to build the room, and that already the ship's carpenter had volunteered his services, as well as the ship's painter and the blacksmith.

Mrs. Wright Green was also prompt. As she left the ship, she handed Knott a plain white envelope, in which were ten new twenty-dollar bills.

"I'm coming back in a week," she told them. "I don't want to see it until it is all finished. I'm trusting you two to do a good job. Don't bother me with details."

"You lyin' old hypocrite," said Harper to Knott, as they stood at the rail and watched Mrs. Wright Green disappear shoreward in a high-powered launch. "What're you goin' to do now?"

"I guess I'll have to think for you till you die," said Knott. "Listen to me. Pay-day is five days off. Bonham has to make good to the preacher, and the preacher to the other fellow day after tomorrow. We give 'em this money, and make 'em both happy. Then pay-day rolls around, and both together we've got enough on the books to our credit to pay it back. Then we drop this kind lady a note enclosin' the money, and tell her the captain won't

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let us do it. What's wrong with that? Didn't I tell you going to church would change our luck?"

"But we lose the two hundred dollars, don't we?"

"Sure not! There you go again advertisin' 'no brains.' We'll tell Bonham. He'll take the money, tainted or not, and be glad enough to borrow. You know the boy'll pay. Besides it gives him a bona fide interest in the mission, and a strangle hold on the preacher. We can't lose."

"It sounds all right," said Quince Harper, "but a mite complicated. Somethin' might go wrong."

"Haven't I just been tellin' you our luck's changed?" scolded Knott, and Harper had to admit that apparently it had.

Arvel Bonham kicked at the method of getting the money, but his protest was mild. There seemed absolutely no other way to make good, and much to the Reverend Ephraim Hepplewhite's surprise, he appeared that night with ten new twenty-dollar bills, which the minister, also in desperate need, accepted, deeming the cause worthy enough for a sacrifice of his personal feelings. He even allowed Rose and the young sailor a few blissful moments together in the study, for his daughter had told him the plans to save and wait a year, which, coupled with this concrete evidence in the emergency, somewhat softened the minister's heart.

Then in a cheerful frame of mind following his keen anxiety, the Reverend Ephraim paid off the mission debt, while at the same hour Mrs. Wright Green met the captain of the *Franklin* at a tea.

"It was so awfully nice of you to give permission for the men's smoking-room," whispered Mrs. Wright Green, all athrill to be bragged on, and after the first startled moment when the captain put down his tea as if it burned him, and munched savagely on a wafer, his mood can best be described as smilingly receptive, while Mrs. Wright Green went into amazing details with enthusiastic abandon, and the captain said nothing, upholding his reputation as a good listener, and giving Mrs. Wright Green her first disappointment.

With pay-day only one day off Knott and Harper had dismissed even the slightest possibility of trouble over the success of their scheme. Then came the captain's summons, like a seed in a cherry pie, and Knott and Harper found themselves suddenly in the middle of a bad fix.

The captain did not waste words. His tone itself made the two old sailors wince.

"First of all you must go ashore and get this money from Reverend Mr. Hepplewhite. Then take it back to Mrs. Green, explain the whole thing to her, and apologize. When you have done that, report to me. I'll have decided by that time how to punish you."

"How to punish us," whispered Harper as they sought milder air outside. "I'd rather face a machine gun than that little preacher."

Nevertheless they went. They had to, and from his cabin port the captain watched their rigid faces as they took seats in the shore-going boat. He chuckled a little as he turned back to his work.

"If they go through with it, I'll let them off," he commented. "The Reverend Ephraim from what I have heard of him, coupled with Mrs. Wright Green, ought to be able to give them a memorable afternoon."

THE Reverend Ephraim heard the faltering confession in black silence, like a bomb with its fuse getting nearer and nearer to the charge. But he didn't explode. Harper and Knott thought he would at any moment, but instead he kept them in a terrifying suspense, which was worse than if he had loosed his fiery wrath upon them.

"And young Bonham is mixed up in this, too," he said at last. "You have tried to shield him, but I know it. Now go back to your captain and tell him what you should have known before you came here. I no longer have the money. It was paid on the debt, and I have no way to recall it."

The little preacher was smiling grimly as he dismissed them. Of course he intended to do what was right, go to Mrs. Wright Green, ask her to wait until the money could be paid back to her in the regular way. But he did not suggest this to the sailors. Let them sweat it out, from the captain down.

Harper and Knott did not look with pleasure on the second interview with the captain, especially since they had only failure to report.

"It's a general court for us," whispered

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Harper, as they stood at the doorway and waited. "We're in it bad."

But the captain had other plans for them.

"Couldn't get it back!" he grunted, and drummed ominously on his desk with a pencil while Harper and Knott waited. Then he turned to them sharply. "I'm going to advance pay-day for you two by a day. You said you'd put down for enough money to pay this off. I'm going to make you do it. Get the two hundred dollars from the pay-clerk and take it to Mrs. Wright Green. Explain the whole matter to her."

"Aye, aye, sir," said the two sailors promptly, but fearfully. They knew this tone of their captain and they also knew Mrs. Wright Green.

"Batted around like a plugged dime on pay-day," complained Harper as they went to the gangway.

In due time they were shown deferentially into the same room where the plan was formed, and with a disarming smile Mrs. Wright Green descended upon them. But she could not keep the pose. The Reverend Ephraim Hepplewhite had just left, and she was feeling all the bitterness of a thwarted ambition. She had been duped, made a fool of, humiliated, and she told the two sailors all of that, and more besides, with a full measure of withering scorn. As she paused for breath Knott timidly produced the roll of bills.

"We didn't mean no harm, ma'am, here's your money," he said, and held it out.

"Keep the money," stormed Mrs. Wright Green, starting in afresh. "You insult me further by offering it back to me. I don't want the money and have just transferred the amount as a donation to Reverend Mr. Hepplewhite's church. I should have done that in the beginning, for I see now that men of your stamp can never be trusted."

With this shot Mrs. Wright Green pulled her skirts aside and swept out of the room, leaving the butler in the doorway with two flat caps extended insinuatingly.

Glad to escape, Harper and Knott once more made their way back to the captain.

"Every time we turn, we get in worse," whispered Harper. "We'll get ten years apiece."

The captain heard them out, and looked them over. This was a development he had not expected, even more punishment than he had counted on for the two culprits.

"That's all," he said shortly. "Get forward! You ought to know better."

And hardly believing the miracle, they stumbled out and went forward, greeting nobody, until finally they sat side by side on their ditty boxes in a sponson, comforted with their pipes and the growing twilight. Patrick Knott was the first to come to life, and he answered a question which Harper had propounded as they came up the deck half an hour ago, and which he now repeated.

"Do you think he means to let us off, Knott?"

"Didn't you see the twinkle in his eye at the last?" answered Knott. "And boy, I've got a scheme. As we sit here, it dawns on me that we've been mistreated."

"I'll have nothin' further to do with your schemes!" decided Quince Harper, but Patrick Knott soon showed him his error, and when Arvel Bonham passed they called him to them.

Bonham was full of troubles. First, there had been the news of Knott's and Harper's interview with the captain, and gratitude that the two old sailors had taken all the blame on themselves, and then full disaster when a messenger came from the Reverend Ephraim forbidding him the house, which left him as desperate as only a man in love can be.

"I don't blame you two," said Bonham. "You tried to help me and the thing fell down. But you haven't lost anything. You've even got your money back, while I've lost my girl!"

"Wait a minute," comforted the two in one breath, and drew the younger man down to a seat beside them.

Then swiftly the plan was outlined, and Bonham took the packet of bills and tucked them into his own blouse.

Certain preparations had to be made for Patrick Knott's scheme. Bonham had to apply for and receive ten days' leave. The Reverend Ephraim had to relax a little in his vigilant watch over his daughter, and Rose Hepplewhite be surreptitiously won over. But things went on this time without a hitch and a week later there came a telegram from a neighboring coast city telling them that Rose Hepplewhite had become Mrs. Arvel Bonham. This was Knott's scheme and Bonham was using the two hundred to do it.

"Helluvanote," said the captain, when

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he heard of it, "that sailors can't be left alone to attend to their own business without meddling from landsmen."

"Helluvanote," said Quince Harper and Patrick Knott, "that we can't help out in a good cause without getting the worst of it."

"Absurd, ridiculous, extraordinary" (proper English for "Helluvanote"), said Mrs. Wright Green, condoling with the Reverend Ephraim.

"Helluvanote," said Bonham, "that a fellow turned Christian can't have what he wants."

And "Helluvanote," said the Reverend Ephraim in the most fiery sermon of his career.

Also from then on for a year Patrick Knott and Quince Harper's lives were even and uneventful. Their luck had changed.

AMOK

by WILLIAM LOUGHLIN

AERONAUT HICKS, who understood Moros better than any white man in Jolo, brought the sullen native into the district secretary's office.

"This here Soriel is just about ready to bust loose, Captain," he drawled. "He got married yesterday over in Tulay—that little fat girl, Josefa—and the *tuba* and *vino* flowed some free last night. This mornin' when I come through the plaza, there was Soriel and the bride tied up to the stone fountain, and all they was wearin' was rope—honest, they didn't have on enough to clean a gun.

"All the Moros, and Chinos, and Filipinos was grinnin' at 'em and makin' cheerful remarks. When I cut 'em loose, the girl beat it, and this hombre wanted to kill everybody in sight.

"He says his other woman, Ila—she's some kind of an A-rab, not a Moro—got the captain of the pearler *Buena Ventura* to put this public shame on him. Unless he gets the people that tied him up, he's 'lost face'—like the Chinos say—disgraced, you know."

"What can I do?" asked the secretary.

"Why, Ila swiped all Soriel's pearls and money and skipped out on the *Buena Ventura* last night. He says, if you'll let him follow them on the gunboat, and get back his pearls and the *dinero*, these people'll think he killed 'em and it'll 'save his face.'"

The secretary was new to the Moro Province.

"That's all nonsense," he said, impatiently, "the authority of the United States ends at the three-mile limit offshore, and these people are twenty miles away by this time. Barring the theft, it's all very childish, anyway. Make him understand that we can not interfere."

Hicks grinned, wearily.

So, the constabulary immured Soriel in his brideless *casa* in Tulay and set a guard over him. The constabulary soldiers were Visayans, and it had no significance for them, that their apathetic prisoner bound his loins with a clean, white breech-cloth, and wrapped his shaven head with a clean white turban, and squatted, gazing fixedly at nothing, during all the long hours of the afternoon.

At dusk, a leaping demon with a whirling *kris* bounded toward the walls of Jolo, leaving two of his guards dead. Soriel, on his way to paradise, was enlisting his escort of Christians. A leap, a scramble, and Soriel was over and in the town streets. Under the big lamp before the Jolo Bar, three soldiers were standing in quiet talk, and upon these Soriel burst like stone from catapult.

The nearest went down, slashed chest-deep through shoulder and clavicle; another caught at the whirling blade and staggered back, a hand shorn clean. The third man bored in, slugging desperately against the sweeps of the razor-edged *kris*. A big packer ran from the Jolo Bar.

Slashing, stabbing, Soriel shook off his third victim and whirled—into a leaden hail. The packer's big Colts were rattling like machine guns. Soriel wavered—fell—writhed over the stones toward his slayer. Officers, sentries, dashed up from every quarter of the town, and the humming barracks poured forth armed men in crowds.

These the guards waved back.

"It's all over. Nothin' but a *juramentado*. Blackie got 'im."

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TIGER BILL

by

WILLIAM CARLTON DAVIS

Author of "Ten Million Ems of Nonpareil" and "Disarmament."

HARD PAN, under the urge of a gold-strike, had intruded into the landscape almost overnight. First a few tents, staked out in the most convenient places; then rough board shacks—an assay office, a restaurant, and the inevitable saloon. The latter was a story-and-a-half affair—first floor and an attic or bunk-house. It seemed as though the sun took one long last look at a bleak plain when it sank behind the horizon in the evening, only to gaze in silent surprise on teeming, pulsating Hard Pan in the morning.

"Tiger Bill" arrived a jump or two in advance of the "rush" that shortly followed. In a very little while he made himself obnoxious, hated and feared by nearly everybody, and shunned except by the few who find in danger and daredeviltry a certain lure. His monumental assurance, his stupendous conceit, the uncanny swiftness with which he could get a six-shooter into accurate action, and the minute provocation required to induce his pistol practise combined to make Tiger Bill an unattractive though picturesque personality.

Almost synchronous with his arrival, he had introduced himself as "Tiger Bill, the fastest gun-hand in the West and the quickest moving object on two legs. Weow!"

The information was vouchsafed under the impulse of copious intakes of liquor, which for strength of "kick" made the nether efforts of the army mule mere suggestions.

And just by way of practical demonstration, Tiger Bill jumped clear of the floor, jerked his weapon from its holster and put two bullets in a portrait of William Jennings Bryan on the wall before he hit the floor again.

Little stories of Tiger Bill floated into Hard Pan with the human tide. His oft-repeated declaration that he stood ready to meet anybody in a "clawing match or a shooting match" had earned for him the sobriquet of Tiger Bill. Nobody seemed to know him by any other name. His muscular hands were like the claws of a tiger. His movements were cat-like. His body was rangy and sinewy and he showed his teeth in frequent snarls.

"I seen Tiger Bill claw hell out of a feller once," related a tenderfoot from Bitter Springs. "Gouged out an eye, scratched off an ear and tore open his gullet. Ugh. It made me sick." He shuddered at the memory of it.

"Which he's sure pizen when he's tanked," added "Overland Dan" of Red Dog, "and careless a whole lot with his shootin'-iron. Fast! He just natchally makes lightnin' ashamed of itself."

"I ain't never met up with this yere Tiger Bill party," drawled a stranger, recently arrived, "and I admits I ain't hankerin' to—none whatever. But I knows his breed, and I makes bold to remark that one of these yere days somebody is going to make it his special business to remove Tiger Bill. He won't make no announcements; he'll jest come a-shootin', when Bill ain't expectin' no trouble. And when the smoke clears away, Tiger Bill will be prostrate and docile. You hear me

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prophesyin'." "Which I says a-men," exclaimed Overland Dan.

And when the bottle had made its rounds the listeners downed their liquor with an ominous fervor in their—

"Here's hopin'."

TIGER BILL'S upper body was compactly huddled over a card-table in Logan's saloon. The rest of him was as compactly bunched underneath. His feet were together on the floor by the chair his haunches occupied. It was characteristic of Tiger Bill to be ready to spring. His left arm rested on the table, extended, like a cat's. His bent right arm pillowed his head, which so rested that when he furtively opened either eye the view was unobstructed. He faced the door.

When the numbing influence of Hard Pan intoxicants had overcome Tiger Bill, somewhere around three o'clock in the morning, he had sufficient inner consciousness—enough of the instinct of the brute that he was, to take this position of alertness. No need for Tiger Bill to studiously arrange his offenses and defenses. He fell into the attitude of readiness as naturally as the jungle tiger which he exemplified in every move of his lithe body.

The sleeping tiger was restless. Little convulsive movements of his limbs and a muscular twitching of his hide were manifest underneath his clothing. His breathing was like a long purr. Now and again one eye opened furtively for a second's survey, and lazily closed.

Three strangers entered the barroom as the sun peeped over the low hills in the east as though anxious to see what changes had taken place in Hard Pan overnight. Two of them were evidently prospectors of the tenderfoot type. The other was rather under the medium in stature, but well knit. He was well dressed, indicating a station in life that had to do with its business affairs—that instead of being a seeker after gold he was one who had already met with success. Black hair, dark eyes and a smooth face gave him a youthful appearance; almost boyish.

The two older men stared with some curiosity at the sleeper. The other merely gave him a fleeting glance. It was cold and the three newcomers turned to the stove.

Tiger Bill opened his eyes and looked balefully at the visitors. He did not again close them.

There was frost in the air, and when the visitors found the stove cold they indicated their disappointment.

"No fire yet, boys," vouchsafed the barkeeper, "but I've got the stuff here that'll warm you."

"We ain't drinking," said one of the men, after he caught a negative head-shake from the others in answer to his look of inquiry.

Tiger Bill was awakening. His tawny head sank between his shoulders as his arms went out to their full length and his fingers spread to their utmost. His back arched and his legs stretched taut. Then he came together and yawned. Tiger Bill came out of his sleep like a cat. And like a cat he looked about him. Watching the strangers he rose noiselessly, and went toward them. He was within a yard of them before they observed him. They turned in some surprise.

"Who's treating?" he leered, as they faced him.

The three exchanged inquiring glances.

"I'm dry," announced Bill, insistently.

"Help yourself; there's the bar," coolly retorted the well-dressed stranger, turning away.

Tiger Bill crouched slightly, like a cat about to spring. His hand went to his gun. It was not his custom to brook the retort discourteous. His glance alternating between the Tiger and the stranger, the barkeeper stood with mouth agape and eyes wide.

Then Tiger Bill sprang, landing close to the stranger, whom he caught by the shoulder and spun half-around.

"I'm going to claw you for that," he hissed, his face close to the other's.

His left hand flashed out and the fingers raked down the face of the stranger, leaving four livid scratches, from which the blood soon began to trickle.

The act was so brutal, so fiendish, that even the barkeeper, accustomed as he was to witnessing violence, blanched as he sucked in his breath suddenly between clenched teeth.

Amazed and staggered by the swiftness of the attack, the stranger swayed slightly, and with a bewildered expression, put a hand to his wounds. Then, as he saw the

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blood on his fingers, he stepped back involuntarily.

Tiger Bill, watching the stranger as a cat watches a stricken mouse, moved menacingly about, ready to strike again.

One of the men who came in with the victim of Tiger Bill's wrath made a clumsy effort to draw a weapon. He crumpled up and went to the floor as Tiger Bill, seemingly without looking in his direction, pulled his gun and sent a slug crashing under his right shoulder. The third man, scenting trouble early, had moved toward the door, and was gone before the muzzle of Bill's revolver swept in his direction.

Bill knew the barkeeper was not a menace. Quickly he turned to his prey. The man had recovered from the shock of the brutal assault, and he stepped up to Tiger Bill.

"You dirty coward," he said, in a level voice. "I'm unarmed. You outweigh me thirty pounds. Put up your gun and I'll fight you with my bare hands to a finish."

With a snarling shriek that was meant for laughter, Tiger Bill cried:

"I'd claw you to mincemeat in no time." Then, malevolently grinning: "They won't be no fight between you and me. Anyway, not right away. I ain't never shot a man what wasn't heeled. But I'm goin' to have a lot of fun with you. First, we liquors up at your expense; then I'm goin' to start to worry you a whole lot, and I'm goin' to keep doin' it as long as you stay in this here camp."

He turned to the bar.

"Set out the bottle, Jim. This little feller is buyin' us a drink."

Tiger Bill waved his hand invitingly to the stranger, and stepped toward the bar.

THE stranger stood still, hate in his eyes. The bleeding furrows seemed to accentuate the paleness of his face. He realized how helpless he was against that armed beast. He felt beaten, humiliated, but not afraid. There rose in him a tremendous resentment. The unprovoked assault upon himself; the shooting of his companion, of whom he knew but little; the cold-blooded spitefulness of Tiger Bill—these rankled frightfully. The finger-nail marks he did not feel so much; he had no sense of pain or fear.

On anything approaching equal terms he would have sprung joyously to combat with the brute. Even against the manifest odds he restrained himself with difficulty. But that discretion which is valor's safeguard, held his impetuosity in leash.

"All right," he said, presently, in a sullen voice. "You've got the drop. Some day, maybe——"

"Mebby what," snapped Tiger Bill.

"Oh, nothing," wearily. "What are you going to have?"

"Now you're talkin' sense, little feller," retorted Bill, as he slapped the stranger on the shoulder, patronizingly.

The stranger stiffened as though a current of electricity had gone through him. The touch of that cruel hand made his blood boil. He threw the hand off as he would have done to a poisonous reptile.

"Don't put your hands on me," he exclaimed, in a voice as sharp as a dagger.

Tiger Bill contracted instantly. His smile vanished, giving place to a look that was half-astonishment, half-incredulity. The two men glared at each other for what seemed a long time.

The barkeeper held a bottle poised over the bar, horrified expectancy showing in his gray face.

Tiger Bill relaxed after a moment. His countenance took on a whimsical look, with a little of admiration. A smile spread over his face, and then he laughed almost boisterously. He was having a new experience, and it seemed funny to him.

"You sure got sand, little feller. And I likes you. You're the first man that ever talked that way to Tiger Bill that didn't become material for a funeral immediately, which means now."

Tiger Bill turned to the barkeeper, whose hand shook as he set out the glasses.

"Barkeep," he said, with a lordly air, "I want to interduce the 'Dare Devil Kid,' what ain't scared of nothin'—absolutely nothin'. I sure cotton to his kind of people. He's a friend of mine, and we're goin' to celerbrate this here auspicious occasion in a bottle of zem zem water, to wit, champagne."

"I'm not a friend of yours, Tiger Bill—if that's what they call you," declared the stranger, looking the fellow squarely in the eyes.

"Now I'm jest awful sorry to hear that, little feller," replied Tiger Bill, in mock seriousness. "I sure am. I sort of counted

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on numberin' you among the e-lect, especially—" his voice grew hard—"as my close personal friends seem—to—live—longer."

The man addressed affected not to hear the deadly suggestiveness in the words.

"Let's drink," he said, huskily.

He felt instinctively that the cat in the man had played with him about as long as he cared to. He was not fool enough to tempt death further. He wanted to get away from the presence of Tiger Bill, who seemed to pollute the very air.

Evidently the strain was getting unbearable to the barkeeper.

"Here you are, gents," he announced, as he hastily set out two bottles of cheap champagne and cut the restraining cords. The corks popped ceilingward.

As the foam bubbled out, Tiger Bill reached for a bottle and turned it into a glass. The barkeeper poured for the stranger, who watched him listlessly. Their glasses filled, Tiger Bill tossed his off with a great show of satisfaction and gusto. The stranger followed his with a wry face.

"Pretty rotten," he ventured, as he threw a twenty-dollar piece on the bar, knowing that he was expected to pay and that if he didn't it meant for him bodily injury at least, if not worse, at the hands of Tiger Bill. As he drank he made a mental vow of vengeance, swift and abundant.

The barkeeper raked the money into the drawer.

"It comes high," laughed Tiger Bill, "but we jest had to have it."

The stranger turned to go.

"You ain't hurryin' off?" queried Tiger Bill, with feigned solicitude.

The other faced Tiger Bill, his hands resting upon his hips, his face wearing a look of unutterable disdain. He opened his lips as though to speak; but seemed to think better of it, and with a sneer started for the door again.

"The little feller is going off mad," laughed Tiger Bill, addressing the barkeeper. Then to the retreating man: "If anybody asks you if you know Tiger Bill, jest tell 'em you do. And if they don't believe you," he continued, savagely, "jest show 'em my trade-mark on yer face. By-by, Mr. —— I didn't git yer name."

At the door the stranger turned about. With arm outstretched he pointed at Tiger Bill, and said, slowly and distinctly, each word as sharp as a shot from an automatic:

"I'll — give — it — to — you — some—day. And—it—will—be—about—the—last—name—you—will—hear."

He held his gaze to Bill's face while one might slowly count three, and again turned to the exit.

With a savage snarl Tiger Bill jerked forth his weapon and sent a scare shot from his hip over the head of the departing man.

"Git heeled and come back," he roared.

"I'll be back," the stranger flung over his shoulder, as he stepped through the door.

"Chuck full of sand," said Tiger Bill to the barkeeper. "He never batted an eye when I sent the lead over him."

"He'll come back heeled," ventured the barkeeper. "Better look out fer him."

"I sure hope he does," declared Tiger Bill. "They jest ain't no fun killin' a man who ain't heeled."

"BIG ED" LAVIN, citizen of Chute Gulch and owner of the dance-hall and saloon known as Ed's place, ready with his wit, but a trifle readier with his six-gun on such occasions as he deemed leaden repartee more to the point, was playing solitaire. Ordinarily solitaire was not looked upon with favor at Ed's place, for the very simple and all-sufficient reason that it is not a thirst-producing card game. Solitaire players do not assay very high from the standpoint of "the house." The bar privilege at a solitaire tournament wouldn't be listed as an asset.

And that is why Joe Ruiz, who learned the saloon business in the big cities, banned the game when he assumed the managership of Ed's place. And he insisted upon Big Ed obeying the rules as a good example to others.

However, nobody was around but the barkeeper, Ruiz was out of town, and Big Ed thought the time opportune to indulge in his favorite pastime.

Chuckling to himself as a preliminary to saying something, Big Ed turned to the dispenser.

"Shorty, are you-all a-watchin' me indulge in this yere little sollytare deebauch?"

"It's ag'in the rules," was the laconic retort.

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"Which I wouldn't have the 'Kid' see me bustin' his rools; not fer no money," whispered Ed, hoarsely, in mock alarm.

"Where's he went?" queried the presiding genius of Ed's bar.

"The Kid gets hisself on to the hurricane deck of a hoss early this mornin' and lights out fer Hard Pan. It's a new camp, and the Kid hates to see a new place get started on the wrong path."

"When's he comin' back?"

"Can't say. Which in the meantime yours truly is havin' as much fun as a kid whut's playin' hookey."

The game of solitaire went on. Big Ed became so absorbed in the intricacies of "Carbunkle" that he failed to hear the approach of a horse. Nor did he see the rider dismount and approach the door to the refectory. He did not look up until a shadow fell across the card-table on which he was playing his favorite game in utter disregard of the regulations promulgated by Manager Joe Ruiz. Big Ed looked as shamefaced as a boy caught reaching into the jam jar.

"Jest kind of sortin' 'em over, Kid," exclaimed Ed, with a very weak and fruitless effort at nonchalance. "A gent says last night he figgered the deck was shy a ace."

Ruiz affected not to notice.

"I want to borrow a gun, Ed," he said, quietly.

Big Ed felt relieved. What he expected was a request for an explanation. But a gun! That was easier to give.

Unafraid of "anything that wore hair," Big Ed entertained a wholesome respect for his manager, born of a deep-rooted regard the strong sometimes feel for the inoffensive brave; something akin to the feeling that a father has for an only son.

"A gun! Did I hear you say gun?" he asked, blankly and incredulously.

"Your hearing is fine, Ed," replied Joe.

Then Big Ed's eyes focused on the four parallel scratches down Joe's right cheek. His face paled and a dangerous glint appeared in his eyes. He pushed back his chair and rose.

"Which I says you can have two guns if you want 'em, Kid. And that's whatever."

His fervent voice had in it a note of inquiry.

"Thank you, Ed. But one'll be enough —all I'll have time for."

"Kid, I don't aim to pry into your private affairs none, but I'd sure admire to know who barked you up. I takes it you wants to go gunnin' fer the party whut done it. But gunnin' ain't your game, specially, Kid. Jest mention to yer Uncle Edward the name of the galoot and point me in his general direction. Which I'd esteem it a honor to remove him."

"No, Ed. I'm playing a lone hand this time."

"And I says you're plumb right, if you hold the cards," parleyed Big Ed.

"It's your deal, Ed," replied Joe, pointedly.

"Which I deals you a full hand, Kid."

And Ed unbuckled his cartridge belt and passed over the .45 and its containing holster.

"Thank you, Ed," said Joe, simply, buckling the artillery about his waist.

Big Ed's face wore a curious expression.

"You sure do look funny with a shootin'-iron draped around your manly form. Which I don't recall seein' you ornamented thataway, previous."

"No funnier than you without, Ed. You look like you'd been operated on."

They both smiled. The situation was somewhat less tense and Big Ed took the opportunity to enter a mild protest against his manager going on a gunning expedition. He was really concerned for his manager's safety.

"Seems as how I recalls," he began, "that a gent by the name of Joseph Ruiz has expressed hisself as ag'in totin' weepons and causin' the deemise of human bein's. Which, if I'm wrong," he concluded, indulgently, "I stands corrected."

"As a general proposition, yes," replied Joe. "I am against it. A brute named Tiger Bill attacked me today, because I wasn't anxious to buy him a drink—up at Hard Pan. He put those scratches on me because I sassed him. Had I been armed he would have killed me. A tenderfoot who came in with me—I don't know his name—started to pull a gun to defend me, and Tiger Bill shot him. I guess he's dead; poor fellow. I owe it to him, and to others, besides having a little score to settle myself, to put Tiger Bill out of the way.

"Don't think that because I don't carry

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a gun I don't know how to use one. I've got a little medal I'll show you, some day. Every man ought to know how to shoot, but that's no sign he should go out and shoot somebody just to keep in practise. Use a target. Everybody ought to know how to swim. But you don't need to jump over Niagara Falls to keep in practise. Use a pond.

"It isn't your gun that keeps you from getting shot, Ed. It's because you play the game on the square. When you do different you'll get yours, gun or no gun, as you ought to. And just like Tiger Bill is going to get his. There are times, Ed, when a six-shooter is the only proper thing to use, and this is one of the times. I'm not wearing this to protect myself; don't get that notion. It's to perform a duty with."

"Which I ain't arguin' with you, Kid, none whatever. But I'd sure like to sit in this game," ventured Big Ed, eyes and voice betraying real anxiety.

"No, Ed. I'm playing a little solitaire myself today."

The shot told, Ed flushed and looked embarrassed. He took a full breath and braced himself. Then:

"Kid, I don't aim to hender you none whatever in your supreme endeavor; which I says it is plumb laudable. But I says, and I says it regardless and unqualified, they ain't no duty beckonin' no amacheur gunman to buckle on a gat he ain't hand-raised and gettin' hisself massacred by a galoot what was nursed on six-guns. And that's whatever."

"Listen, Ed," replied Joe, calmly. "A duty is never really hard to perform; it only looks hard. The only way is to go straight to it. It is just naturally my duty to plug this bad-man. I've got to do it. I count on you, Ed, to let me play it alone."

Joe extended his hand. Big Ed clasped it in both of his.

"If I don't come back——"

"If you don't come back, Kid, me and the boys'll ride herd on this yere Tiger Bill party and fill him so full of holes he'll look like a Gatling gun had worked on him a week."

Joe smiled, even though he realized the deadly earnestness of his friend.

"Good-by, Ed. Don't tell the boys—yet."

Their eyes met. There was a fervent hand-clasp, and Joe turned to his horse, Big Ed staring after him, too overcome to speak. Joe mounted and rode away, waving a farewell to Big Ed. As he disappeared 'round a corner, Big Ed found his voice:

"The game little son-of-a-gun," he exclaimed in admiration.

Then he turned to the barkeeper. The fire of quick decision was in his eyes.

"Hand me my other .45," he barked. It was tossed over the bar—belt and all. Ed caught it on the fly and buckled it on.

"Goin' after him?" queried the mixologist.

"I'm figgerin' on attending the obsequies of a coyote called Tiger Bill. Which I goes in style becomin' a gent whut's free, white and twenty-one."

And so saying, he strode out.

JOE had in his head no well-conceived plan of attack when he rode out of Chute Gulch for Hard Pan. He had merely made up his mind to keep looking until he found Tiger Bill. On locating him he would simply shoot him down. The possibility of missing the first shot, or of being a fatal fraction of a second behind Tiger Bill in getting into action did not enter into his calculations. In fact, he had no calculations. He had merely decided to shoot Tiger Bill, and he hoped to get a shot into him for each of the four scratches on his right cheek.

Joe did not concern himself with ultimate results. He rode along as a man having in hand a business undertaking, and the matter which occupied his thoughts was the expediency with which he might transact that business and return again to his place of abode.

It was dusk when the solitary horseman cantered into Hard Pan. Yellow light from oil lamps sent meager beams through windows and cracks of the hastily erected rough board shacks. Grotesque shadows danced and careened oddly on the tents as their occupants moved about. In the obscure light Joe saw men moving about, some unpacking effects, others wandering about aimlessly. There were piles of lumber here and there, heaps of supplies.

Joe wondered whether he would be able to recognize Tiger Bill in the half-light of the stars. He believed he would, but that

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he might encounter him outside he dismissed as a minor probability.

He brought his horse to a walk. Saloons and dance-halls were engulfing a stream of humanity. There blared forth the indifferent melody of the old reliable fiddle and guitar—the pioneers of the symphony orchestra.

Whatever may be said of the quality of the music, it measured up to the standard in vogue on the frontier—copious as to quantity and reliable as to tempo. And as an aid in the process of separating the wayfarer from his dust it left nothing to be complained of. Joe had no ear for the music; his feet were not attuned to the dance. So he guided his horse to a post, dismounted and tied the animal fast.

Ruiz drew Big Ed's Colt from its holster. He rather felt that there would hardly be time for that necessary operation should Tiger Bill happen to see him first. The Tiger's reputation for speed in gun-play, he reasoned, amply justified him in drawing while the drawing was good. He remembered seeing somewhere that "time is the essence of this contract," and he saw no reason why he should give himself "the worst of it."

One thing he fully resolved upon, and that was that he would not pull the trigger until Tiger Bill faced him. It would hardly be fair, he thought, to do otherwise; and, besides, he very much wanted the fellow to know, provided, of course, he entertained any feeling of curiosity concerning his assailant's identity.

By a process of elimination, Ruiz narrowed the probable whereabouts of Tiger Bill to two locations—where there was something to eat or something to drink.

Holding the weapon at his side, that he might not invite unnecessary attention or bring upon himself combat he did not seek, he kept away from the light that filtered through the openings. Making his way to the saloon where he had made the acquaintance of Tiger Bill, he cautiously approached a window, from which point he commanded a view of the interior. After a careful scrutiny Joe became satisfied that the man he sought was not numbered among the guests.

The other hard-liquor emporiums of Hard Pan were given the same careful attention by Ruiz, with negative results.

Well, if Tiger Bill wasn't drinking, he must be eating, Joe reflected. Animals like him had been known to eat. The only restaurant was a tented affair back of the saloon, a smaller tent annexed serving as a kitchen.

Clutching the weapon in his right hand, Ruiz noted a roughness about the handle. His investigating fingers encountered little hills and valleys. Notches! With his thumb he noted that there was room for at least another. He cocked the weapon. As he heard the clicks of the mechanism he reflected that it was probably a self-cocker. But he wasn't sure.

At any rate, having the hammer ready to fall was a minute advantage he felt himself entitled to. However, he would hold steadfast to his purpose not to press the trigger until Tiger Bill faced him.

Approaching the tent he heard the clatter of dishes, and the odor of steak, ham and coffee assaulted his nostrils. He recalled that he had eaten nothing since breakfast. Well, another few minutes would make no difference. He thought he would prefer a steak, with a cup of hot coffee.

Three men were just pushing aside the flaps of the tent as they emerged. Noting that Tiger Bill was not one of them, Ruiz kept the six-shooter at his side, as he stood sidewise to avoid observation.

"The coffee was —— good, but the steak was tough as ——," complained one of the men.

Ruiz mentally decided to take ham. The three men disappeared into the gloom and Ruiz lifted the weapon to a horizontal position as he approached the entrance, above which was crudely painted:

RESTARANT

Joe smiled at the spelling. In the center of the opening, just back of the flaps, was a two by four, supporting the ridge-pole. The flaps hung partly open, and he could command a view of both sides of the long table. Joe's glance swept by the half-dozen feasters and rested on Tiger Bill, seated at the other end of the table, facing the entrance.

It was characteristic of Tiger Bill to face the entrance. He would have accounted himself inexcusably careless were he to sit with his back to an outside door. He liked to be in a position to greet both friend and foe—and greet them first.

Tiger Bill was draining a cup of coffee.

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His head was thrown back. His right hand clutched the heavy cup. Ruiz observed that the handle of Tiger Bill's ready revolver protruded above the edge of the table.

AS THE Tiger's cup-encumbered hand began to lower and his head came forward, he caught sight of a leveled revolver aimed at his head, and behind it a man with a scratched face. The flash of recognition and the flash of fire were simultaneous—almost. A bullet shattered the thick china cup like an egg-shell. A piece ploughed into Tiger Bill's forehead. His hand went to his gun, but the bleeding stump of a trigger-finger is more of a hindrance than an aid when quick and accurate shooting is necessary and desirable.

Tiger Bill's answering shot went wild—that is, wild for him. It missed Joe's head by the small fraction of an inch as it chipped a piece out of the ridge-pole.

A shot through the body and another in the right shoulder further reduced his efficiency as a sharpshooter, and the red flood from the gash over his eyes aided materially in rendering him a negligible quantity in the .45 caliber argument.

Tiger Bill managed another desultory shot, but it was no more effective than the curses he sent with it.

When the fusilade began, the other diners hastily retired, backward, going under the canvas. It is considered neither courteous nor healthy to mix in other people's quarrels on the frontier of civilization.

So much can happen while Father Time is putting five seconds into the discard.

A flood of snarling profanity poured from the lips of the Tiger. As he cursed, red drops splattered from his lips on to the table. The gash over his eyes was deep. His gun had dropped from his wounded right hand, and he was making desperate efforts to reach it with his left. The blood blinded him. He shook his head savagely and cursed horribly. Mortally stricken and helpless, Tiger Bill was spitting and snarling like a cat with a death wound. Only his vocal organs seemed capable of performing their functions.

Tiger Bill had not fully recognized his assailant in that one swift glance through the merk of kerosene lamps and the smoke from the cooking. He saw the avenger now but vaguely through blood-filmed eyes behind a curtain of pistol smoke.

"Who the —— are you?" he roared, with an oath.

Ruiz advanced toward Tiger Bill, who tried to wipe the blood from his eyes that he might better see. The fighting animal in him asserted itself when he saw the approach of the relentless enemy. He made another desperate effort to locate his gun. Through the red film he caught sight of it on the floor and lunged toward it with his left hand. His twitching fingers were about to close over it when Ruiz kicked it under the tent.

Tiger Bill poured forth a torrent of curses as he gazed banefully up at his foe.

"I've got you, Tiger Bill," said Ruiz. "I told you this morning when you asked my name, that it would be the last you'd hear. During the few minutes you've got left, think of Joe Ruiz."

Tiger Bill made a futile effort to rise, but fell back in his chair, as the curses and blasphemy came forth afresh.

Partly because he wanted to get out of that atmosphere of sulfurous utterance, but largely because he felt assured that he had accomplished his purpose and incidentally wound up the career of one whose passing would cause no flurry in the crêpe market, Ruiz turned abruptly away and disappeared through the flapping entrance, about which a few curious ones had gathered, attracted by the short pistol duel.

Big Ed Lavin was shouldering his way through the crowd. His face lighted with gratification when he caught sight of his manager, seemingly unhurt.

"Come after your gun, Ed?" asked Joe, with a wan smile.

Such a question at such a time made Big Ed blink. It was so foreign to things he desired to discuss—so entirely unexpected. He knew there had been some shooting. The smell of the smoke, the atmosphere of suppressed excitement told him that. He felt reasonably certain that Ruiz had been a very active participant. He had come a long way and come fast—a human interrogation point rampant, only to be asked if he came after his gun.

His voice was pregnant with reproach.

"I hopes fervent, Kid, you ain't aimin' to insinuate that I loses my reason so plumb extensive that I comes all the way to this

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yere burg without no shootin'-iron ornamentin' me."

"Not at all, Ed; but I'm through with guns."

He breathed a sigh of relief as he passed Big Ed's weapon over to him.

Big Ed took it. The barrel was still warm.

"And this yere Tiger Bill party?" he queried.

"Well, he's through, too," was the pointed reply.

"Which the drinks is on me," said Big Ed.

The news of the affray had preceded them, and as the two stepped into Logan's saloon at the head of a small but thirsty procession, the motley throng inside separated into a lane of homage for the man who had rid Hard Pan and its environs of an undesirable presence. A huge blue-shirted fellow stepped up to Ruiz. He extended a hairy paw, which Joe took.

"I didn't have nothin' ag'in this yere feller they called Tiger Bill," he said, "but I hears he sure was a hard crowd, and I extends a vote of thanks to you-all fer straight shootin'."

"Stranger," put in Big Ed. "Mr. Ruiz yere—the Kid, I call him—is that modest he blushes like a school marm at words of praise. But speakin' fer him, he jest plumb delights in squelchin' galoots what goes rampagin' around promiscuous thataway. And we-all would esteem it a honor if you-all would let Chute Gulch buy the refreshments for the crowd."

While the bottle was making its hesitating way down the bar, a torrent of frightful oaths floated in.

A man appeared at the door, wild-eyed and breathless.

"Tiger Bill got his," he volunteered. "They're carryin' him up-stairs to his bunk."

"——, you're late; we're drinkin' to his health," some one exclaimed.

The cursing broke out afresh, and a hush fell on the crowd. They heard two men struggling up the outside stairway with the heavy body of the dying man. They heard Tiger Bill's flow of frightful blasphemy, which increased as he was laid none too tenderly on the board floor. They heard him spurn with curses the offer to remove his boots before death overtook him.

The torrent of profanity became broken, incoherent. In the midst of an oath his voice broke and the lips refused to utter it.

"All set, gents," said the barkeeper, breaking the silence.

"FLOORING" AN ATHEIST

BY E. A. BRININSTOOL

DOWN in the Raton Mountains, in New Mexico, a bunch of cowpunchers who were driving a trail-herd to be delivered at Taos, New Mexico, fell in with a peculiar individual who styled himself an atheist.

He traveled several days with the outfit, and was found to be an entertaining sort of chap, but always wound up his talk with the statement that there was no God, that all the beauties of nature to be seen on every hand in that locality were made "just by chance," and that it was an absurd idea that there was such a thing as a Supreme Being.

One day, when well up in the mountains, where peak and crag, mountain and precipice, were unfolded in dazzling grandeur, with castled buttes and yawning chasms, the atheist remarked:

"What magnificence! How grand and sublime! How remarkable and awe-inspiring this all is!"

One of the cowboys who had evidently seen different days in his earlier youth, drawled out, as he removed his hat and gazed on Nature's grandeur:

"Y-a-s, yas-sir-ree! You-all hev bin preachin' as how there ain't no God, but I'm right here to tell you, stranger, that if there ain't any God *now*, there *has* been one some time."

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THE REVERIE OF AN OLD "REGULAR"

by ALBERT JAY COOK

OH, I tramped a post in Cuba, in the clash of ninety-eight,
With the whining Mauser dum-dums spraying low;
I was ticketed Havana through the cane and ripe banana,
With an outfit of the line from Fort Monroe.
We were sure a bunch of hellions, an' we took our pleasures hard,
(Booze an' women, scraps an' gambling on the side).
We were fighters in the day-time, in our duty an' our play-time,
An' we couldn't show up saffron if we tried.

Then a G. O. shipped us eastward to the land of the Ladrones,
An' we took the ol' Kilpatrick 'cross the sea;
We used tons of Krag confetti, north an' south of the Lunetty,
Givin' lessons to the Gugus: "Why a people should be free!"
There was *bino* an' we tried it—nothin' much we didn't do;
Till they picked us out to break the Boxer Chinks;
An' we left Manila City, which was certainly a pity,
For we just got used to mixin' native drinks.

There we herded with the Tommies, up from Tientsin to the walls
(An' our ranks were gettin' thinner every day).
But it wasn't long in ending and they weren't long in sending
Us to help make Auguinaldy quit his play.
We were under ol' "Hell-roarin' " Jakey Smith upon Samar,
When the Bulingiga crime was pulled on "C";
An' it wasn't no kids' party when we started in quite hearty
Takin' toll and payin' debits merrily.

Then we hit the trail to Frisco, an' the bunch all got discharged,
(The hardest-hittin' Johnnies in the land).
But I met my ol' top-kicker an' discoursed a tub o' licker
An' it ended with me holdin' up my hand.
An' I got the triple chevrons but I lingered years before
We were shot across the border as a screen;
After months of weary waitin', desert duty, rookie baitin',
I attached the diamond emblem in between.

Now, I've got a bar upon me with the rainbow's colors on,
An' I know a bit about the Army game;
We have dropped the wild-eyed scramblin' for the licker an' the gamblin',
An' we're better, by a long shot, for the same.
For the wars, these days, are diff'rent than they were some time ago,
When our rations they were mostly hate an' wrath,
When the boys cared not a muckle but they'd surely groan an' buckle,
If they had to tread the straight an' narrow path.

Oh, it's sometimes, though, I'm yearning for the old days once again,
When I know my common sense should tell me nay;
(But I'm here in O. D. flannels an' in military channels,
So I shouldn't have a bloomin' word to say)
But I can't forget the comrades that I soldiered with so long.
An' I'd like to have them under my command;
For those boys were 'carnate devils in their battles an' their revels—
The hardest hittin' Johnnies in the land!

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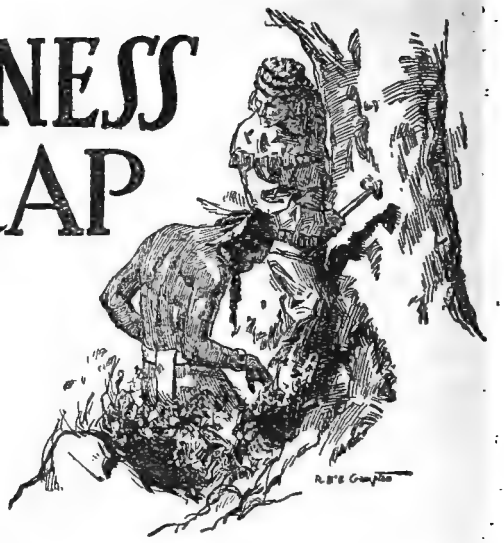
THE WILDERNESS TRAP

by HUGH PENDEXTER



AFTER the Cherokees had expelled the Shawnees from the Kentucky country the white settlers east of the Alleghany Mountains found an open door in their restless search for new homes. This door was Cumberland Gap, and it opened into a paradise for the hunter, trapper and backwoodsman. Kentucky being a debatable hunting ground for the Indians north of the Ohio and the Southern tribes it was occupied permanently by no tribes.

The French largely controlled what is now Ohio, Indiana and Illinois; but as their exploitation of a new region demanded the cooperation of fixed Indian colonies, and as Kentucky lacked such, no attempts were made by the Gallic adventurers to possess this fertile section. So, although styled "The Dark and Bloody Ground," the country, as a fact, afforded better opportunities for home-seekers than almost any other area of similar extent bordered by the English colonies.

This absence of permanent Indian villages did not, however, prevent a heavy shadow falling across the fair land, a shadow that took the shape of a tomahawk or war-club: for through the thickly forested reaches war-parties from beyond the sinister Ohio and from the Cherokee Nation in the south were frequently passing. The settler's security existed in streaks and comprised the lulls between raids. The very uncertainty of the red man's coming was, perhaps, more trying to the nerves than a danger known and faced.

Therefore, imagination was a handicap for those first settlers who filed down the Wilderness Road and through the Gap to enter the silent land. One constantly expected to hear the war-whoop even though there be no Shawnees south of the Ohio: one was justified in believing the Cherokees had invoked the Red War-club, when in fact those warriors might be peacefully engaged in their towns along the lower Tennessee. In brief, it was no place for those equipped with ragged nerves.

To a born and bred pioneer like Boone it was a land of mystery, Nature's gigantic fairy-book filled with the pleasance of romantic adventure as well as with monsters waiting to be subdued. It fascinated and stimulated, and yet always threatened disaster. Guileless and good-natured, unlettered but deeply versed in the tricks of the forest, was Boone, known to his friends as Dan'l.

Kentucky had been traversed by adventurers before this great pioneer entered the land. It was the stories told by John Finley, trapper, two years before that had fired Boone with a lust to behold the realm with his own eyes in this year 1769. Boone typed the atmosphere of the country and the times; and although he never dreamed as much his was a nature and a name to be indissolubly linked with the history of the land. To

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speak of Kentucky is to think of the prince of backwoodsmen.

When he entered the unknown forests with five companions he found Finley's tales had failed to do the region justice. It surpassed his most ardent expectations, and when only he and John Stewart remained he could not return to Holman's Ford on the Yadkin in North Carolina, but needs must stay and feed his insatiable appetite with a more intimate knowledge of this wonderful section.

There were stories of vast caves to be investigated, and astounding recitals of skeletons of fabulous animals along the various licks to be verified. Above all he could never grow insensible to the wondrous charm of the endless woods, the gracious intervals and the eternal calm of the country.

He felt more contented when quite alone. Now that Stewart was off with the dog after game he felt thoroughly at ease as he lounged before the earth-banked cabin, his bold high forehead bared to the breeze, his wide, thin-lipped mouth relaxed and his serene blue eyes feasting on the charms spread out before him. The season was well advanced and the hardwood ridges were flaunting the bloody belts received from October. The air held the tang of old wine, and the warmth of a roaring fire was congenial after the sun went down.

As he stared over the silent landscape he wondered what it all meant, and why it should soothe his restless spirit and hold him there. He dearly loved his family back on the Yadkin; yet this solitude appeased some longing as no human ties could do. Across his knees rested his long, heavy rifle, small of bore to conserve powder and lead, yet the best gun a pioneer ever toted into the forest. For more than an hour the wizardry of the woods had whispered vague promises of new mysteries to his inner ear provided he would heed the call and pass beyond the horizon.

And yet he knew that once he reached the limit of his present ken he would not be contented until he had penetrated the next horizon, and the next. His reverie was interrupted by a cold muzzle sliding into his hand. Subconsciously he had noted the return of the dog and did not move. But as he caressed the brute's head his senses became thoroughly objective, and he slipped behind a beech while the dog pricked his ears and growled.

"Not Injuns, nor b'ar," he mused, noting that the dog did not rise. "Somethin' comin, pup; but nothin' to be skeered of, eh?" he murmured, returning to his former position before the door and following the direction of the dog's fixed gaze.

The growth of bushes flanking a grove of black-walnuts rustled and the dog growled again. Boone shifted the position of his rifle just as a white man stepped into view and flung up his right hand in salutation.

"Keep shet, pup," commanded Boone, rising. "Howdy, stranger. Come up an' squat an' I'll git ye a bite to eat. My pup's so used to being alone he don't know how to behave hisself. My name's Boone—Dan'l Boone."

"I'm Peter Amesy, Virginy. Lawd, but I'm glad to meet up with a white man."

And the newcomer threw himself on the ground and stretched out in relaxation.

"Didn't know I had a neighbor. Wait, an' I'll git ye some cold meat."

"Never mind th' meat. I've et. Let me have a bit of terbaccer." As Boone tossed over his pouch Amesy continued. "Ye can't scurcely call me a neighbor. Come from th' Ohio arter tradin' out all my goods. Sent my furs up th' Kanawha by two of my men an' took a notion to cut down through here an' see th' country. I've heard a heap about it. Reckon yer nearest neighbors is th' Pingrees on that little crick ye strike arter follerin' th' stream about twenty miles." And he pointed toward the Red Bird, tributary to the South Fork of the Kentucky. "I stopped there a few days ago. Ye prob'ly know th' woman's pretty sick."

"Pingrees? Woman sick?" cried Boone, his kindly face crinkling with surprise and pain. "Now that's too bad. Never even know'd there was any settlers 'round these parts. I've been waitin' for my partner, John Stewart, to come in from huntin' so's I could foller that stream an' see jest what she's up to. We've been west quite a bit, huntin' for some big caves, but not up-stream any. Doggone it! A white woman sick an' Winter comin' on, an' I never 'lowed there was a cabin this side of th' Gap, 'cept this shack behind me. Woman sick! Sho—that's a heap too bad!"

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BETWEEN puffs on his pipe Amesy continued:

"She oughter be toted out. Broke her leg an' her husband set it an' done it wrong, I reckon. She can't walk. I offered to help fetch her out, but he's so pindlin' he could never hold up his end of th' stretcher. It's more'n two husky men oughter do, seein' it must be done quick. If he was able to lend a hand an' spell us I'd say we oughter go back an' fetch her out. A man can take his chances, but it's plumb hard on a woman. She told me she didn't want to come here when he brought her in."

Boone heard this in open dismay.

"Why, of course she must be fetched," he cried. "Why, I never heard th' beat of it. Here's me 'n' Stewart doin' nothin' when we could 'a' gone up there an' worked her down to th' Gap by easy stages. Never dreamt a woman was within a couple hundred miles. I'm goin' to fetch my fambly in next Spring, but I shall take care of 'em. Pingre didn't oughter fetch his woman here if he can't look after her. There ain't no question but what we'll fetch her out. To leave her would be murder."

Amesy caught some of Boone's spirit, and sat up and frankly confessed:

"I hate like sin turnin' back. I oughter be over th' mountings an' lookin' after my pelts. But if ye 'n' yer partner want to turn the trick I'll go back an' lend a hand."

Boone frowned and pulled at his chin.

"Stewart may be out two or three days," he mumbled. Suddenly a rare smile lighted the concern of his strong face, and he cried: "I've got it! Providence must 'a' sent th' pup here. I'll send word to Stewart by th' pup. I'll tell him to stick here at th' cabin till we come. Then ye an' me will hustle to th' crick an' tote her this far. We can stand twenty miles easy. Once we git here we'll have Stewart to spell us."

"If he could go with us we'd make better time. If he could foller us he'd meet us."

"But Stewart ain't as handy in th' woods as I be, an' he might stray off to one side. Then we'd lose time while I looked him up."

"Then yer plan is best. Fix up yer word an' we'll fetch her this far."

Boone secured a charred stick from the fireplace in the cabin, and laboriously wrote on a piece of dressed deer-skin—

Com to the cabin an wate

This he tied about the dog's neck, then rubbed the animal's nose with one of Stewart's old moccasins to give him his cue, and ordered him to be off. The intelligent animal readily took up the hunter's trail and disappeared on the run. Boone next brought out some dried meat and divided with the trader, and slinging on his powder-horn and a pouch of bullets took the lead up the Red Bird.

As they swung along the bank of the stream, following an ancient Indian trail, he asked—

"How's Injun signs up on th' Ohio?"

"Quiet. They're through with this country. A chief told me at Shawneetown that they made nothin' by bringin' th' ax down this way. Th' French, too, is tryin' to stop 'em. French want 'em to go to work an' fetch in pelts 'stead of sculps. I was lucky to close trade just as a French agent come along an' told them not to dicker with me. My furs was already started for th' mountings, so I could laff at him. Th' Injuns is all right along th' Ohio, an' they'll stay so till th' French stirs 'em up against the English settlers. But that won't make any trouble down here, as th' French ain't got nothin' to gain south of th' Ohio."

"I'd like to see that Ohio country. Jest to take a peek at it," said Boone wistfully, his eyes flashing with the enthusiasm of a child contemplating some new and marvelous toy. "I 'low so many folks will be comin' here soon that a man will feel crowded."

Amesy guffawed.

"Crowded! An' ye never know'd th' Pingrees was livin' near ye!"

"Stewart sorter held me back from rangin' 'round as I'd liked," Boone apologized. "Then we lost time in puttin' up th' cabin. But this Winter I'm goin' to see more of th' country. Twenty miles to th' Pingrees' smoke? We'll make it sharp."

The primeval growth through which they were almost constantly passing contained none of the usual forest litter. A wagon would have found no inconvenience in traversing the broad aisles. Boone, warm of heart and anxious to succor the helpless, held the lead and pressed the pace, resolutely ignoring the scenic beauties that tugged at him to pause and admire.

"Glad things is simmered down along th' Ohio," he said over his shoulder. "We

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had quite a few rubs with 'em durin' th' Summer."

"Safe 'nough so far as th' Injuns is consarned. Course there's th' French an'——"

"An' who?" prompted Boone.

"Girty. Simon Girty—th' —— renegade dog!" fiercely replied Amesy. "He's got a heap of say-so with th' Shawnees. He done for Ike Patten, trader 'n' friend of mine. Kept him alive two days."

Boone's kindly face became distorted with rage, and he fiercely declared:

"That skunk needs killin' more'n any of th' Injuns he herds with. Yes, sir! He needs killin' powerful bad."

"Ye don't need to blat it out so's he can hear way up on th' Ohio," warned Amesy, glancing uneasily about. "They do say he's th' devil. Red Wolf, an old Shawnee chief, what I give some rum to, told me that Girty seems to know what folks say about him even when he ain't nowhere near th' folks talkin'. Knows things ye'd never reckon he'd hear of."

"He's got plenty of spies 'round, I 'low. I only ask that he comes within a hundred an' fifty yards of me," was the grim rejoinder. "That's about th' limit of range in these woods. But let him come in sight an' he's dead th' minute I clap my eye along th' barrel."

After an hour's fast travel Boone suggested that they separate and scout both banks of the stream, meeting at sundown to camp for the night. This they did, but Amesy lacked the subtle woodcraft that Boone employed unconsciously. Perhaps because no danger was apprehended; or —and the pioneer believed this the more likely—because he was more at home bartering cheap trinkets and rum for peltries than in picking a quiet path through the forest.

"With all outdoors to move 'round in he sartainly manages to make hisself heard," chuckled Boone, as he heard his companion slip on a wet root and rip out a string of curses. Then their ways pulled apart and the pioneer was alone with the solitude his nature was ever craving.

His proposal that they part company was prompted by force of habit. He knew the Shawnees were north of the Ohio, too busy in procuring the Winter's meat to bother with a few possible scalps in the Kentucky woods. But there was one right way for two or more men to follow a stream. The absence of danger, however, permitted him to enjoy a grave contemplation of nature in the big places.

The primitive in him kept asking, "Why is it?" With a little smile he ridiculed the old query; for he knew that could he understand the "why" he could also foretell the end and unravel the enigma of the universe. Still it pleased him to wonder why beginnings must be made in solitudes. Why was not the start made amid confusion and clamor? Men gravitated toward noise. And why must the companionship of the forest also contain hostilities?

He paused by the trunk of a huge oak and patted the bole affectionately, and murmured:

"I 'low ye're the answer. We find most strength where there is quiet an' loneliness. A young world needs lots of brawn an' gits it through lots of sleep. Real strength don't waste any of its power in makin' a fuss, like we mortals do. A tree sends a root out to find water an' splits a ledge, but it don't make a noise in doin' it. From acorn to this big feller, an' not a yip, not a sound. That's why woods an' hills last so long an' are so strong. They don't tire themselves by makin' a fuss——"

He vanished behind the trunk with the abruptness of a fleeting shadow, his philosophy forgotten. Something was following his trail; nor did he think for a moment that it might be Amesy. The trader was noisy; this was a silence that shadowed him. It was characteristic of the forest to spring such surprises. He waited but a short time before he located it definitely, an almost imperceptible *pad, pad,* which bothered him to classify.

Cocking his rifle he held it half-raised and cautiously poked his head 'round the trunk. The declining light of late afternoon wearied the gaze, but at last he caught it, moving from side to side in an erratic fashion, a low-crouching figure that made him think of panthers.

"Well, I'll be cussed!" he gasped, as the animal drew nearer and he recognized his dog. "Hi, boy! Here!"

WITH a glad whine the dog rushed to him, but, as taught, refrained from barking. Boone bent to caress him and exclaimed softly. The broken shaft of an arrow protruded from the

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muscles of the dog's neck. Dropping on one knee the pioneer sought the widest possible range between the ancient trees; and not until he had swept every avenue of approach did he dare to give the animal any attention.

The dog whined and attempted to lick the hand resting on his head. Boone examined the arrow and found it cruelly barbed, a war-arrow intended to remain in and aggravate the wound. With his hunting-knife he cut through the fold of skin and pushed it through. From his pouch he took a home-made ointment and smeared it over the hurt. The dog had been shot while seeking Stewart, as the roll of skin was still tied to his neck. A closer examination of the broken arrow shaft showed Boone it was one with which he was familiar. It was the reed shaft of a Cherokee arrow, so well known to the settlers of the Carolinas.

"War-party," mumbled Boone, still squatting on his heels. "Either got wind of me an' t'others bein' up here an' come to visit us; or else they're bound for th' Ohio to take a whack at th' Shawnees. Quiet, pup! I 'low I'm glad Amesy ain't here. He might take a notion it would be safer to keep goin' toward th' Ohio 'stead of totin' Mis' Pingree out. Now they've been travelin' hard all day an' they've gone without eatin'. They'll stop to bust their fast. That gives me a little time. Wish I know'd how it goes with Stewart. He's jest got to git my talk."

Procuring some tinder-like moss and dry sticks he struck a spark from his flint and steel and charred a stick. Unwrapping the deer-skin he added to the original message—

Look out cherakes stick clos to cabin

Rearranging the message he took the dog's ears in his hands and stared earnestly into the loyal eyes, and in a gentle whisper explained:

"Ye jest got to do it, pup. Ye must find John Stewart an' give him my talk."

Then pointing to the back trail he snapped his fingers, and with one mournful glance the dog trotted off.

Resuming his way the pioneer studied the reed shaft as if expecting it to tell him much, but his meditations did not erase the frown from his tanned face. That the Cherokees might happen upon his trail and follow him did not concern him nearly as much as the fear they would discover his friend. Stewart did not possess his woodcraft, and it would be very possible for him to be taken by surprise. The shot at the dog, however, served to convince him the Indians did not suspect Stewart's presence, else they would not have run the risk of discovery by wounding the poor brute.

"No, they hadn't struck John's trail when they potted th' pup," he decided. "An' they didn't know nothin' 'bout our shack, or they'd been stalkin' it. One of th' warriors caught a glimpse of th' pup dartin' off an' shot at him. If they then seen it was a dog an' chased him to find his owner they're now on my trail, which is as she should be. But I must begin to cover up, to find Amesy and keep him low without tellin' what I know. I can say Injuns without sayin' Cherokee."

His method of advance instantly changed. He commenced picking his steps with that consummate concern that only comes to one who daily plays at hide and seek with death, and may lose because of a careless footprint. Nor did he throw the broken arrow away to be picked up by his possible pursuers. He thrust it into a pocket of his hunting-shirt.

Striking back to the Red Bird he successfully negotiated a dry crossing. Darting at right angles from the stream and studying the ground closely he soon found Amesy's trail and observed that the trader had been loath to wander far into the woods. It took him an hour to run his companion down, and when he came up to him he knew the Pingree cabin must be within a few miles. Amesy jumped in alarm as Boone emerged from the woods, and threw forward his rifle.

"Steady!" warned Boone.

"Lawd, man!" the trader peevishly cried out. "Ye oughter know better than to do that. I was lookin' for ye to come from t'other side th' crick. If it hadn't been for yer hat I might 'a' fired."

"Got nervous after I quit ye?" genially inquired Boone.

"Reckon I felt uneasy," grumbled Amesy. "I ain't 'zactly a woman in th' woods, but I'd swore I was bein' follered if I hadn't known I wasn't."

"But how d'ye know ye wasn't bein' follered?"

"Because I wasn't jumped." And Amesy grinned broadly. "If any Injun wanted

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me he had lots of chances of gittin' me. I jest kept tellin' myself there wasn't no reds 'round, an' kept pluggin' along."

Boone's face grew very grave. More than ever did he realize he must have eyes for both. While unwilling to tell the whole truth and thereby frighten the trader from aiding in the rescue of the crippled woman, he did inform:

"There's some Injuns near here. But I don't think they've struck our trail yet."

"How do ye know they're near if they haven't been on our trail?" quickly demanded Amesy.

"I jest sorter opine that there is some near. When I feel that way I don't bother to figger th' why of it. My idee is this: there's enough light to travel by for a few miles. We must push ahead to th' Pingree cabin. Either th' Injuns won't make for there, or they will. If they don't, it'll be a fine place for us. If they do, it'll be fine for th' Pingrees to have our rifles there."

Amesy readily agreed:

"That's common sense. An' we can make it. It ain't much more'n five miles. Th' Pingrees was fools to come out when there ain't a settlement in th' whole country."

But Boone had no sympathy with such a radical statement.

"Prob'ly seemed all right when they come," he demurred. "An' I know how they felt. They wanted room to turn 'round in an' air that hadn't ever been breathed afore. They wanted to be where they wouldn't wake up mornin's and see another smoke over th' ridge. Let's mosey."

It was useless for Boone to cover his trail so long as Amesy left signs at every step. The pioneer knew the Cherokees would make for water. Once the Cherokee struck the Red Bird they were sure to discover his and Amesy's trail. There was no question in his mind but what they would give chase. This resolved the situation to a question of speed with the cabin as the goal. The light was dying fast and Boone was glad to see it go. Night, black and velvet, came when Amesy estimated they had not more than a mile to go.

"I wish the light had held another twenty minutes," he groaned as he floundered into a hole.

"If it's hard for us it's harder for them what wants to catch us," was the philosophical response.

"What would we do if they jumped us now?"

"Drop soft like into th' crick an' fight from under th' bank. Only one can git to ye at a time, an' as they don't know jest where ye be it stretches 'em out in a long line. If we swing away from th' stream we'll find easier footin'. We can dodge th' trees by holdin' our guns in front of us."

But Amesy feared they might miss the cabin if they quit the stream, and accordingly their advance was accompanied by considerable confusion and noise. With his inborn woods astuteness Boone picked his way with the subtle instinct of a wild animal, but this finesse was wasted now that Amesy was continually tripping and falling over slippery roots and rotten logs. Occasionally the trader drew too near the bank and splashed into the water. He swore continuously in an undertone.

"If ye'd leave out some o' th' hell-fire an' feel ahead with yer feet ye'd do better," admonished Boone, halting. "We gone more'n a mile since ye set th' distance last."

"It must be just ahead," wearily replied the trader.

"Then ye stay here an' rest an' I'll scout ahead an' find out."

"Stay here and git an ax in th' back of my head? Not for all th' pelts ever paddled up th' Ohio!"

"Close yer trap an' keep still for yer life!" hissed Boone.

"What is it? I don't hear nothin'," whispered Amesy.

But the next moment he heard something, heard a terrible, ear-splitting war-cry, and he jumped far and wide. And Boone swung about with a savage on his back. He felt something against the muzzle of his rifle and fired. Grabbing at the fingers in his throat he ran the risk of braining himself, bringing the butt of his rifle upward with all his strength. With a sickening crunch it smashed into the face over his shoulder.

"Make for Pingree's!" he yelled to Amesy, and then went down with half a dozen live and one dead warrior on top of him.

BUFFETED and bruised but bearing no serious wounds Boone was pushed along, his hands tied behind his back, till he glimpsed a wide expanse of stars and knew he was in an opening.

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His captors had not uttered a word since reducing him, but now a deep voice called for a fire.

Boone gave a quick start, and exclaimed:

"Shawnees! An' I 'lowed they was th' Cherokee."

With the coming of dawn Boone was released from the torture of the "spread eagle" position he had been forced to endure throughout the night. It was with difficulty that he gained a sitting posture. There was no sense of feeling in his limbs till after he managed to drag himself to a small, smooth birch and pull himself upward some dozen feet, and then, clasping it tightly, slide to the ground. The friction started the circulation, and after repeating the maneuver several times he found he was able to stand and walk.

Some thirty warriors grouped about several small fires watched him curiously, and their leader, bearing the totem of the snake painted on his chest said he was making medicine. And to prevent any magical results sprang forward and raised his war-ax. Boone ignored him and seated himself with his back to a tree and fell to staring at the raw-hide thongs hobbling his ankles. These permitted him to take short steps and he was wondering if it were worth the risk to snatch the ax from the chief, sever his bonds and dart away.

He decided his muscles were too sore for the test; and glancing up into the savage face he gave the white man's "wink." For a few moments the ax hung suspended over his head, then the chief grunted in approval of his bearing, spoke to the warrior standing guard and returned to his fire.

Boone realized he was in a very serious predicament. Running away from the Cherokees, who had wounded his dog, he had run full tilt into the Shawnees. Could he and Amesy have foreseen their danger they would have slipped aside and attempted the rescue of Mrs. Pingree while the two hostile tribes met and fought it out. Now when the Cherokees came, and come they would unless the Shawnees beat a precipitate retreat, he stood an excellent chance of being brained by his captors to prevent his falling into the hands of equally cruel captors.

"I'm like a woodchuck half-way through a wall with a pup hangin' on to his tail an' another grippin' him by th' nose," he grimly told himself.

The guard brought some cold venison and threw it at the prisoner's feet and then kneeled to make sure the hobbles were intact. Boone scrutinized him closely and discovered he was not a Shawnee, but a Cherokee. Speaking in the soft, musical mountain dialect of the Cherokee, well known to the borderers of North Carolina, the pioneer said:

"You have run away from your people, yet even now a shaman makes medicine against you. He has gone to water and placed Black Beads on your name. Prayers have been said to the Red War-club and the Cherokee come to take you from the Shawnee."

With a gasp of amazement the Cherokee glared at him murderously and felt for his knife; then bit his lips and jeered:

"The white man would die by the ax or knife so the Shawnee can't cook him. The Black Snake will take him to his village on the Ohio and place a necklace of red-hot axes 'round his neck. The Buzzard will laugh at him."

"The Buzzard will not laugh now he knows Death follows him," was the calm reply.

"The white hunter lies when he says the Cherokees make medicine against a name. The Buzzard is now a Shawnee and has changed his name. The Black Beads can not harm him. The Black Clay can never smother him."

Despite these confident words the Buzzard was perturbed if not alarmed. Psychology was at work. A name was as much a part of a warrior as an eye or an arm. A shaman could blast any man by mishandling his name as surely as though he gave him a mortal thrust through the body. Nor was it death a warrior feared; for all must die. But should a shaman's medicine work successfully on a name the owner's soul would wither and die, which was equivalent to the white man's lot of eternal damnation. Boone ate ravenously of the meat and paid no heed to the guard.

"The Buzzard killed a Cherokee and became a Shawnee. He never will be covered with the Black Slabs," mumbled the warrior.

This further reference to the sacred formula for destroying life inspired Boone to retort:

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"A shaman has stepped over your soul. He knows your clan and name. Your paths stretch out toward the Darkening Land, and you are covered with the Black Cloth. Your soul will fade away and you will become blue and be dead in seven days—unless you find a mighty medicine."

The warrior could not suppress a shudder at the suggestion his soul would be given over to the Blue Spirits in the North. Mere death was child's play to such a fate.

"I will go to the water and make medicine," he defiantly muttered.

"Yu! Make medicine and yet the red arrow will find you," warned Boone. "Go and pray to the Long Person (river) and yet you will be covered with Blackness. Only the white man's medicine can save you. It is a little voice, yet so strong it makes the Cherokee turn and run very fast. The voice-medicine can save if the white man causes it to do so."

In fear and hatred the Buzzard snarled:

"The white tongue lies. I have lived with the Shawnees many years. The red arrow can not find me."

"It has hunted for you many moons. It is very near," said Boone, polishing off a bone and throwing it aside. "For many moons it has flown through the forest seeking you. It has passed through many trees and through the bodies of many round-horned elk and deer, and now it comes close to you. And when it comes you will know you will be a dead man in seven days unless the voice-medicine of the white hunter saves you."

"Lies!" hoarsely defied the Buzzard. "The white hunter knows the hatchets will be heated red for him to wear. If his voice-medicine is so mighty let it save him from the red hatchets."

And he turned away.

From inside his hunting-shirt Boone fished out the broken arrow he had removed from the dog's neck and poising it between his index fingers, much as a boy shoots a paper dart, he gave it a little fillip. The fragment described a short arc and struck smartly against the Buzzard's neck, breaking the skin.

With a wild scream the Buzzard leaped from the ground and faced about, with knife raised, his face distorted with fear of the supernatural. Boone was gnawing at a second bone. The Buzzard stared uncomprehendingly, then discerned the broken arrow, and with an inarticulate cry sprang to pick it up, but fell back empty-handed. By this time the other warriors had swarmed about him, demanding an explanation. The frightened man pointed to the ground. Boone gained his feet, thinking it better to die standing, if die he must. The Black Snake snatched up the arrow, and said—

"Our adopted brother still carries old arrows with him?"

The paint on the Buzzard's face glistened with sweat as he looked on the familiar reed shaft and barbed head and noted the smears of blood. Surely it must have traveled far and long to become so worn. The Buzzard pointed to his quiver hanging from a bough and containing only arrows of Shawnee make, and gasped:

"It is not from the Buzzard's quiver. It fell from the sky."

Black Snake instantly gave a command, and the camp was emptied of warriors, with the exception of himself, the Buzzard, and two others, who remained to guard the prisoner. The chief next demanded of Boone—

"Does the white hunter know of this arrow?"

"He saw it fall from the sky and strike the Buzzard on the neck. There are red axes following it. They are thirsty and will drink much blood," informed Boone.

"Before the axes drink the hunter will be covered with strips of bark. The bark will be covered with pitch and lighted. When the fires would eat him too fast hissing water will be poured over him a little. This shall be done till either the water or the fire wins him."

"The Black Snake is a liar," said Boone contemptuously.

No sooner had he given this defiance than he was reeling back beneath a blow from the flat of the chief's ax.

"The hunter has the answer of the Black Snake, of the Manato Clan," was the sententious accompaniment of the blow.

Boone rubbed a hand across his face and stared curiously at the crimson stain his fingers brought away. Then he gritted—

"The hunter will scotch a snake for that."

Hissing like a true reptile the chief struck again with the flat of the ax. For the second time Boone stared at him steadily, and warned—

"Kill now, or you will die."

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The chief lifted the ax, edge forward, hesitated, then turned and strode back to the fire.

The Buzzard, an interested spectator of the brutal scene, taunted:

"Where was the white man's medicine? It must be sleeping."

"It is working. The Snake will never see the Ohio again," retorted Boone. "The medicine that kills never sleeps." And he glanced to where his rifle stood against a tree. "It will strike when I leave the Shawnees."

"You will never leave the Shawnees except in smoke," assured the Buzzard, yet eying him with respect.

"I still live."

"The Snake waits for the other white man."

In saying this the Buzzard forgot his fear of the war-arrow, and grinned hideously.

BOONE made no reply. He was surprised that Amesy had not already been brought in. That Amesy, who had shown himself to be a clumsy woodsman, had not been captured during the night could only be explained on the supposition that he had dropped into the creek and had remained hidden, under the bank, beneath projecting roots.

The Buzzard took up a position a few feet behind him, and an hour passed with neither speaking. Then the warriors sent to find the Cherokees began returning, each reporting failure to find any sign of the foe. The Black Snake listened to the cumulative evidence in open surprise. The Buzzard heard it first with dismay, next with an awful fear weakening his heart. Obviously it was a sinister mystery. The arrow had been propelled by a bow, but how could the bowman come within range of the camp, let him be ever so cunning, and retreat without leaving a single trace for the sharpest eyes in the Shawnee Nation to discover?

Only the Buzzard believed he knew the answer, and he dared not speak it lest he be viewed as something tabu to the warriors. The white hunter must have spoken with a straight tongue: it was a magic arrow.

After all possible explanations for the arrow's presence had been discussed and rejected the chief gave a command and the Buzzard and another seized Boone and trussed his hands behind his back. As they finished a shrill call sounded from the depths of the woods. The Snake threw back his head and answered the signal. Then the warriors became silent and motionless. The near-by stream gurgled and sang and made argosies of the Autumn leaves. Down the bank some wild life entered the water with a splash. With a chill striking him to the heart Boone gazed fixedly at the forest screen.

Now they were come, the warriors who had pursued Amesy the preceding night. In single file, their bowed and oiled bodies glistening in the sunlight, they glided from beneath the trees, and in the middle of the line walked a white man. A glance, and Boone groaned aloud in sympathy:

"Doggone it! They've got ye!"

Amesy turned his head and stared curiously at the pioneer; then amazed the latter by stepping from the line and coolly lighting his pipe at one of the fires. Then he came and stood before the prisoner and grinned down on him sardonically.

"Be ye gone plumb out of yer wits?" cried Boone. "Or do they 'low ye're crazy?"

The last with a touch of hope; for the insane were under the special protection of the Great Spirit and must suffer no harm.

"Oh, white man, make very strong medicine," snarled the Buzzard.

"Ho! ho! The white man has been asleep. Now he will wake up!" shouted the chief.

And the warriors in grim merriment crowded close and made derisive gestures.

"What does this mean, Amesy?" slowly asked Boone.

"That Dan'l Boone is a fool," replied Amesy with a loud laugh. "Lawd! what fools they raise in Carolina!"

Wheeling, he spoke a word and Boone was seized by the heels and dragged across the glade and stood upon his feet.

"Look there!"

Boone followed the direction of the pointing finger and his eyes blinked as he beheld the charred and dismantled walls of a cabin. Wild grape vines almost concealed the ruins. Grass grew tall about them. He knew this sad evidence of Indian ferocity must be very near to the Pingree cabin. The mists began clearing from his mind and in the depths of his blue eyes queer fires were lighted.

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"I 'low ye rather took Dan'l Boone in, mister," he acknowledged.

"This is th' Pingree cabin. Ye come so far it ain't more'n right ye should take a squint at it. Built by two Pingree brothers 'bout a year ago. Shawnees got 'em afore they could have a house-warmin'. It's th' only Pingree cabin in th' country, an' it makes a smart trap for Carolina fools."

"I 'low so," Boone gently agreed. "An' all this snickerin' means that a skunk in a white skin is herdin' with these red scum, an' that ye made up th' yarn 'bout a sick woman jest to git me up here off my guard?"

"Ye begin to see th' beauty of it," chuckled the white man. "We had to use a different game to fetch th' Pingrees, but if any one moused 'round in them logs an' ashes they'd find we got 'em. Beats th' old way all holler. That's why th' Shawnee think such a heap of me. I fetch game to their traps an' it don't cost 'em no warriors. We come down here jest a purpose to git ye. An' how do ye like it?"

Boone pursed his lips thoughtfully and gave a little tug at the wrist bonds. The rawhide would not give.

"Jest who might ye be, mister?" he asked.

"I'm th' cuss what done for poor Ike Patten. I'm Simon Girty," was the mocking reply. "Met Ike up on th' Kanawha, an' he talked mighty pert 'bout Girty. So did I. Then we two come down th' Ohio to find an' wipe him out. Took Ike a long time to die. If I don't disremember, ye was sort of free in yer talk 'bout Girty."

"It wa'n't nothin' to what I could say," assured the pioneer in a purring voice.

The renegade noted the congested veins on the high forehead and stepped back. As he did so Boone suddenly leaned against the Buzzard and raised his moccasined foot and smashed it into the grinning mouth, bursting the lips to tatters and caving in several front teeth.

With a shriek a panther might have envied the blood-flecked villain sprang at the prisoner. The Buzzard in violently pushing Boone from him shoved him clear of his assailant for the moment; then the Black Snake and several of the warriors caught the infuriated man by the arm and pulled him farther from his victim.

"Let go,—ye!" screeched Girty, trying to shake off his red friends. "I'll trim him to slivers."

And in his rage he spoke in English.

Black Snake began talking rapidly in Shawnee. Panting and breathless and held powerless the renegade gradually ceased struggling.

Twisting his head Boone shot at the Buzzard—

"Does the Snake talk of hot axes?"

"Axes—and other things," was the uneasy reply.

Girty's rage subsided and was replaced by an incredulous expression. The chief produced the broken arrow. The renegade examined it keenly, then said to Boone—

"Tell me what this means, or I'll bake ye now."

"Death," answered Boone, speaking in Cherokee.

"The medicine of the Snake is very strong," proclaimed the chief.

"The arrow is not for the Snake. He will be killed by a white man," said Boone.

Girty waved the Indians back. The arrow being a mystery worried him. He leashed his ferocious anger while he sought to understand the phenomenon. According to his red friends the arrow had dropped from the sky; but the scouts, quickly flung out, had made a complete circle about the camp without finding any trace of the Cherokees.

"Did ye see any trail of th' Cherokee while scoutin' t'other side of th' crick?" he asked. "Tell th' truth an' I'll see ye ain't tortured. Mebbe ye can buy yerself free."

"Th' arrer is big medicine. Mebbe it'll tell ye how an' why it come here," retorted Boone.

"It's some —— trick," growled Girty. "If th' Cherokees shot th' arrer there'd be some sign of 'em. They can't cover up a trail but what my Shawnees would find it. We'll go back an' git that friend of yers. We'll take ye to within sight of th' cabin, with a gag in yer mouth. Yer friend'll come out on th' run."

Boone remained silent, outwardly composed, but a flicker of hope in his blue eyes was perceived and interpreted by Girty, who grinned wolfishly and assured:

"Ye won't git th' chance. Thinkin' ye can break away an' run for it durin' th' scout down th' crick?"

With that he directed the Cherokee to remain on guard, and returning to the warriors he urged an immediate advance down the Red Bird. Black Snake opposed

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the plan, declaring he would wait till convinced no Cherokees lurked in ambush. Girty fumed, but the chief and the majority of his warriors held firm, arguing the prisoner's friend could not escape the country. If no Cherokees were hiding along the stream the coup could be counted on the morrow. Having made this decision he selected several of his best trailers and instructed them to follow the stream for several miles and examine both banks.

THE sun passed on to the west and the day had all but worn itself out when the scouts began returning. Each gave the same report. Search the forest as they would they could find no trace of the enemy.

"Th' arrer was th' white man's trick," declared Girty to the chief.

"A trick, or his medicine," slowly replied the chief. "With the next sun we will capture the other white man. Shall we take the white hunter with us?"

Girty remembered the tell-tale flicker in Boone's eyes. To take the prisoner down-stream would mean to risk his escape at every rod of the way. From what Boone had dropped the renegade knew Stewart was rather unsophisticated so far as the forest was concerned. He shook his head; then looked toward the prisoner and began laughing in hideous mirth.

Black Snake nodded in approval and the warriors displayed more animation. All knew from experience that the renegade's horrible merriment was the prelude to the torture. Several warriors commenced trimming a stout sapling for a post, others collected dry wood. The chief began removing the iron heads from six tomahawks.

"Yu!" softly cried the Buzzard, his eyes snapping at the preparations. "Where is the white man's medicine now? They make ready the necklace of hatchets."

"When I wear the red necklace the Buzzard's soul will enter the blue trail. It shall be so. The Cherokee even now draw near."

"The white man may have medicine," uneasily conceded the Cherokee. "The Buzzard will believe when the Cherokees sound the war-whoop."

"If the Buzzard waits for that he had better sound his death-cry now. Inside my belt is the voice-medicine. It will not work when I am dead."

The Buzzard cast a wary glance at the busy warriors and swiftly inserted his fingers inside the pioneer's belt and found the tiny pewter whistle Boone used in signaling to Stewart and in calling his dog. The Indian stared at it dubiously.

"When the Cherokees seek you, blow hard and the voice-medicine will drive them back. If I am dead the voice will not speak," murmured Boone.

The Buzzard rose and walked away, but as he took the whistle with him Boone began to take heart. Fear of the unknown was having its way with the Buzzard. His dread of soul-blighting, shamanic wrath greatly outweighed his fear of death. To die was the ordinary ending of the brave; but to have the soul turn blue, to become as nothing, leaving him as nothing, was the most terrible fate a warrior could imagine.

Boone realized all this as he watched the dark figure lose itself near the torture stake. Dusk was closing in. It became difficult to distinguish one warrior from another. Suddenly the Buzzard stood before him, his eyes glowing. To stimulate the spell he knew must be working in the superstitious mind Boone softly said:

"I hear moccasins deep in the forest. Voices are whispering."

The Buzzard hunched his shoulders to conceal a little shudder and glanced uneasily at the trimmed sapling and the heap of dry fuel. Once the wood was reduced to coals and the axes heated red the white man's medicine would be useless. On the other hand, if the prisoner were to escape and the Cherokees did not come the Buzzard would always regret having missed the treat of the red necklace. Flames began creeping through the fuel, and the savage heads were all turned in gloating on the victim. Girty put up his pipe and leisurely advanced toward the prisoner.

"Oh, Lord, so long as the Cherokees must be close on my trail, let 'em come closer. So long as they shot my dog let 'em take a shot at these Shawnees," muttered Boone.

An owl called dismally down the creek, and the Buzzard barked for silence. Girty halted and looked to the chief, who stood with head thrown back, his beady eyes glistening in the light from the flames.

"The owl talks at night, my brother," reminded the renegade.

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Again came the *hoo, hoo, hoo-o-o;* this time from the west. Almost instantly it was repeated in the east.

"They follow the red arrow! They are on three sides of us!" cried the Buzzard.

The warriors sprang to their arms. Girty stood irresolute and fingered his ax. He decided the prisoner could wait and turned to aid in smothering the fire. Already the Shawnees were slipping into the black forest. The Buzzard cut the prisoner's thongs, and whispered:

"Climb the tree you climbed this morning, and catch the bough of the big tree and cross into it. At the foot is a rifle."

A mighty war-whoop ripped a half-circle from east to west, and the Shawnee outposts began falling back, hurling defiance at the foe and calling warnings to the camp. This was Boone's chance, and with a leap he was shinning up the tree. The glade was thick with gloom and smoke. Rifles were crackling in the forest. War-whoops were now interspersed with the death-cry. As Boone swung himself hand over hand to the bole of the ancient tree a bull-like roar from the glade advertised Girty's discovery of the escape.

Slipping to the ground the pioneer rejoiced to find his own rifle, powder-horn and a pouch of bullets. The Buzzard had taken no chances of weakening the voice-medicine. With a sigh of content Boone loaded his rifle and made his way to the stream. From the opposite side came the shrill shriek of the English-made whistle. The Buzzard was forsaking the battle.

For nearly an hour the fighting continued, now dying down, now bursting into full fury, as the combatants came together in the darkness. At last there came a lull that persisted, broken only by the signals of the Shawnees. Boone had advanced scarcely a quarter of a mile. Now he struck south more confidently, the long rifle held before him like a staff to guard against the trees. The Cherokees were falling back. They had been following his and Girty's trail and were not in the mood to give battle to a war-party.

The Shawnees increased their ringing yells of triumph. Above the din roared the savage voice of Girty, blasphemous and raving, as he ranged the forest in search of the escaped prisoner.

"They'll be throwing a circle 'round this neighborhood in 'bout a minute," grunted Boone. "Th' nearer it gits th' thicker 'n closer it'll be. Best time to bust through is now."

And turning from the stream he made to the west.

Once, as he was halting behind a big beech, and depending entirely upon his ears before advancing, he caught a tiny sound near by. Scarcely breathing he waited. Something *scuffed* softly against the opposite side of his tree. Stepping noiselessly 'round the bole, his rifle raised with the butt to the fore and held like a javelin, the pioneer all but plumped into the savage. The Indian began a yelp of alarm, then went crashing to the ground, brained by the rifle-butt.

The outcry and the sound of the body falling told the full story to all the Shawnees within hearing; but although Boone knew a score or more of Indians were closing in he paused long enough to procure the dead warrior's ax. Then he exerted every faculty in getting beyond the contracting circle. He proceeded only a short distance when he collided with a naked form.

The startled *"Waugh!"* was followed by the thud of an ax. As the Indian collapsed Boone's hand struck a necklace of bears' teeth, and he knew the Black Snake had made his last raid. Several warriors now blundered upon him. Crouching low he fired his rifle, eliciting a death-howl, then sprang to one side and struck left and right with his ax till he had hacked a path through the velvet darkness and the obstructing forms.

But now the pack had the scent and were drawing in from all quarters. Twice that night Boone halted his ghostly flight and betrayed his presence by firing at the sound of Girty's raucous voice. Far off in the east sounded the eery whistle of the retreating Buzzard.

AHEAD was the Gap; the gateway of the Wilderness Road. Stewart turned back as Boone came to a standstill, and asked:

"What's th' matter? Ain't ye got 'nough of this cussed country?"

"I 'low I'll go back, John. I'm mighty cur'ous to know how th' country looks up beyant that crick. Tell th' folks I'll prob'ly be home next Summer."

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THE CAMP-FIRE
A Free-to-All Meeting-Place For Readers Writers and Adventurers

A WORD from S. B. H. Hurst concerning his story in this issue:

Seattle, Wash.

There has always been a fascination for me in wondering about the men who never come back—who for some reason or other leave a good home, never to be heard of again. The slabs over many family vaults have vacancies, which are filled only with guesses. About the endings of such wanderers there is for me a greater pathos, and a greater human interest, than there is about even those who die in battle. On the outskirts of the world we touch the edge of the great mystery, for in such lonely spots our interest is less distracted.—S. B. H. HURST.

A VERY interesting contribution is added to the accounts furnished by members of the Camp-Fire of lost or buried treasures, not included among the hundreds described by Stephen Allen Reynolds in his series of articles a year or two ago. These data are given by Wolcott LeClear Beard, now a major in the country's service, with whose stories in *Adventure* and elsewhere you are familiar.

I am impelled to write you a word of appreciation of the Lost Treasure series, just completed, in which, in common with all your other readers, I fancy, I was keenly interested. I was also impressed with the infinity of research which must have been the price paid by Mr. Reynolds for his material.

This being so, the fact that he may have overlooked a bet is in no way remarkable; rather is it remarkable that he has overlooked so few. It may also be that while I was away where neither *Adventure* nor any other magazine was to be had, I may have missed one of his articles. Still, so far as I know, he makes no mention of what may be one of the world's greatest treasures.

I REFER to Atahualpa's chain. Most of us have read Prescott's account of the last great Inca (that there are Incas still is a fact not generally known, but is, as Kipling used to say, another story) and of the circumstances under which Atahualpa, the Inca in question, died. Taken prisoner by Pizarro, and held for what is said to be the greatest ransom ever demanded, Pizarro, while this ransom was being collected, got an attack of what now would be called "cold feet," and had Atahualpa treacherously murdered.

When they heard of this murder those who were bringing the ransom hastily concealed the gold they were bringing, in order that it might not fall into the hands of the Spaniards. Most of it was thrown into Lake Titicaca, but much was hidden elsewhere. While I was in South America one lot, amounting, it was said, to about $540,000 was found. I believe that the find was somewhere near La Paz, and at the time I was leading an exploring expedition in the far interior of Bolivia. The questions I asked when I returned were met by an impenetrable reticence. Moreover, I was given to understand that I would be more popular with the powers that were, if I ceased to ask them; which, as it was quite useless, I did.

THE chain, however, is another matter. As the story was told me by not one, but many, it was designed to stretch, on ceremonial occasions, entirely around the Inca capital of Cuzco, and its links were made of bars "thrice the thickness of a man's thumb." This would bring its value—for it must have been about three-fourths of a mile in length—well up into the millions.

The chain now is said to repose in only about four feet of water in the bottom of a sort of well, communicating by a subterranean passage with Lake Titicaca, situated on one of the small islands near the larger island of Copacabane, where it was thrown when the news of Atahualpa's death reached its bearers.

THIS is not a secret. Many times I have heard it discussed openly and casually. But it lies on or very near the border dividing Peru and Bolivia. Neither Government dares sanction an attempt to raise it, as it is an object of veneration among the natives and such an attempt might result, it is feared, in an *indiada*—that is, a universal rising of the myriad Quichua and Aymará Indians, which never yet has occurred, but of which all people of European descent live in constant dread.

I do not, of course, vouch for the truth of the foregoing. I simply "tell the tale as 'twas told to me." But, so far from being at all improbable, it bears strong internal evidence of a degree, at least, of truth.

MR. REYNOLDS hardly could be said to have overlooked anything in the Philippines; yet those islands, and especially Luzon, probably contain more buried treasure than any spot of equal area in the world. But it is scattered in comparatively small lots, as it was buried by its former owners in the time of stress and Aguinaldo.

Just before I took over charge of the province of Pangasinán as its supervisor, an individual named Prado was hung in Dagupan for three or four out of

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fifty or more murders that he was known to have committed. He was a chief of *talisanes*, or, in other words, a thief on a very large scale. While awaiting execution he, it is said, offered to reveal the hiding-places of his treasure to the sergeant of his guard if the latter would connive at his escape, which proposition was declined. But a dying native, who was one of two, and the only survivor of those who had buried the treasure, did reveal the location to my master mechanic, a white man married to a mestiza —all of which, please note, is quite in accordance with the established methods of fiction in such cases.

MY MASTER mechanic told me. We could not recover the treasure for reasons not necessary to go into, and for aught I know it may still be where Prado placed it. It was said to amount to about $40,000 Mex. For the benefit of any who wish to have a try, I hereby reveal the secret.

The silver was buried in two parcels. One of them was almost within arm's reach of the gallows upon which Prado was hanged—that is, underneath what afterward was the band-stand, built in front of the convent in Dagupan when the troops occupied this convent as barracks. The other parcel is under a circular, turfed mound, about twenty-five feet in diameter, before the building that was used, during the military occupation of Dagupan, as Q. M. and C. S. stores, and near its center.

ONE buried-treasure episode took place in the compound of my own house in Lingayén. One of my servants, and a very good man despite the fact that he was a "trusty" prisoner serving a nineteen-year sentence for murder, was in the habit of sleeping outside my bedroom door, armed with an old gas-pipe Remington, 50-caliber rifle. One night the rifle spoke, and running out we met Soltiro—the "trusty's" name was Soltiro—returning to his post with a satisfied smile on his face and the smoking rifle in his hand. Asked what had happened he said that there had been a man outside who didn't "desire to speak"—that is, who wouldn't answer when challenged—so he, Soltiro, had shot him.

"Was he a white man, Soltiro?" we asked him.

"Oh, dear, no!" he replied. "Only a Filipino, like myself."

Then he returned to his *petate* and once more composed himself to slumber.

SOLTIRO had not shot the man, however. The range being at least seven yards, he naturally had missed him. The next morning we found that this unknown person, whom Soltiro suspected of having designs upon my chickens, had really come on quite another errand. In a hole he had dug was the impression of a pot that must have held two quarts or thereabout of what undoubtedly was a cache of silver Mexican dollars.

FOR the benefit of any who may wish to raise Prado's treasures, it may be as well to state that in all probability these Philippine caches have been lifted by my ex-master mechanic long since.

AS TO Atahualpa's chain—assuming, of course, that the stories of its location are true, and even assuming that it might be reached, which it could not—it lies, as I said, in Lake Titicaca, which is on the Interandean Plateau, 12,000 feet above the sea and hundreds of miles from salt water. In that vicinity the country is rather thickly populated, and the presence of a strange white man would instantly become known. It would be hardly more possible to remove any considerable portion of the chain by stealth than it would be to do the like by the Woolworth Building; and to remove it in any other manner one would have to fight not only either or both the Bolivian and Peruvian Governments but—what is infinitely worse—the countless hordes of Indians that would rise to protect this venerated relic.

Had it been possible to get away with this treasure, there are no end of men, many of them desperate and intelligent, who would have done so. But so far as I know, no attempt, even, ever has been made.

YOU already know that our old comrade, Harold S. Lovett, the marine who served on the *Agamemnon* at the Dardanelles, is now chief gunner on a merchant ship and that he dropped in to see me here at the office. For several years I've been referring to him as an American. I don't remember now how I got that impression in the beginning but it was a mistaken one, for he's an Englishman. He had never bothered to set me straight on it though he has been getting our magazine as regularly as distance and circumstances would permit.

Incidentally, he tells me the British sailors aren't so willing to ask for things they want as are the Americans and that he has seen men on the *Agamemnon*, who wanted to read a copy of our magazine but didn't like to ask for it, stand off at a little distance with a pair of binoculars and read it over another man's shoulder.

Before this reaches you I hope to see him again. I owe him a lunch. Had it all arranged for last time and, through another person's fault, I missed him.

Here is a letter from him that came a little while before he arrived himself:

Special Service.

Have had a little sport since last I wrote you. Was running down the Irish Sea in particularly dirty weather, aboard an old tramp, capable of doing 7 knots at a pinch. In St. George's channel our engines went on strike, and we had to lay to for six hours for repairs. We'd hardly been under way five minutes when Fritz handed us a visiting card in the shape of a 6-inch shell.

I'M CHIEF gunner on the old lady, have a beautiful new 4.7; oh, I *love* her! Well, we returned the compliment and settled down a nice little duel which lasted close on five hours. The squareheads had two-six-inch guns to our four-inch and when they got busy you can bet we found life a fair bustle. However, we had a very limited supply of ammunition so I just fired slow and careful, taking pains over my spotting and making as sure as I could of each round.

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AS I said there was one ball of a gale blowing, and being empty we pitched and rolled some, and Fritz was a good 4,000 yards away on the weather side, so we had to face all nature could give us as well as Fritz. After about an hour and a half we scored a hit, about the 15th round, and then I opened up with high explosives, having found his range. Well, it lasted more than three hours longer but, to cut it short, I guess I'm about the only guy who can tell his relatives where to drop a nice wreath.

At present am in our English port loading for America, so, if there is a chance, I may see you inside a month. Of course nothing is certain, but in any case I'll drop you a line as soon as we get across the Western. Am hoping to pass a word with many old friends of trail and camp, sea and range, so here's luck to you and all the Camp-Fire boys.—HAROLD S. LOVETT.

WHY isn't citizenship taught in our schools? The first thing a democracy should teach is democracy. Why isn't citizenship made a definite part of home training? An American's duty is to make a good American out of his child as well as out of himself.

To bring these things to pass is a main part of the work of the American League for Citizenship, Inc., which should be in operation by the time you read this. If you see the need of these things, there is the chance to work for them efficiently.

SOME time ago I told you about one of our fiction stories that was later written up in a Pittsburgh paper as fact. Also how a newspaper story had been made exactly paralleling an incident in a story by D. L. Mackaye—about the officer who made a private salute him fifty times and then, having failed to return each salute, was compelled to do so by his own superior.

It takes quite a while for a letter to go to Hawaii and bring back a reply, but here is Mr. Mackaye's answer to my query as to the origin of the incident he used:

Honolulu, T. H.,
April 15, 1918.

I am squeezing out a line in an unexpected odd moment, having the reply to your last note heavy on my conscience. Have been on duty with the waterfront guard "in addition to his other duties" (which is the "goat line" of the army) and those other duties have been considerable in themselves. Expect to be transferred to the draft regiment expected to be organized in Hawaii shortly and am looking forward to something besides guard duty.

NOW in regard to "Brothers in Arms" which you queried me about. Two incidents in that story, so far as I know, were facts. My informant was Fred Nugent, formerly hospital steward at Fort McKinley, P. I., and now pharmacist at a local sanitarium, a former pal of mine when we were together in the medical service in the Islands here. Before he got his stripes and while on orderly duty, he was the victim of petty persecution (according to *his* account, you understand) on the part of a shavetail in the California field artillery. The incident of the flagstaff and the salute which you say has been repeated in the East occurred in the course of this and was exactly as related in the story, the other officer concerned having been Major ——, then, I believe, of lesser rank. He was in the Islands at the time I wrote the story but was later transferred to the border. The second incident, the smallpox patient and his troubles, was also related in the story exactly as it was related to me, except that five wardmasters were successively jugged for refusing to carry out the treatment. Nugent was the first, passing the word of the man's real state on to the others in turn. Actually, the smallpox patient was not the lieutenant of the flagstaff, but the two incidents worked nicely together in fictional guise.

I never heard before of anything approaching these two incidents, and if one of them was repeated in the East, credited to another camp, have a strong suspicion that it was cribbed. There is only one way to get local color for army dope, that is, to live alongside it or in it for a long time and I imagine that the reporters stuck on a training-camp story.—D. L. MACKAYE.

BEING blind in one eye, he was refused by the American Army, so, when I heard from him, he was following another path to the front. And he makes a suggestion to his comrades of our Camp-Fire—that we establish a password so that when one of us met another he would, even if he didn't know him, "know that he was with a friend. I am quite sure," our comrade, E. C. Johnson, goes on to say, "that if I met a 'Bo' or 'Boomer' in tough luck and he gave me the password, if I only had a dime I would give him a nickel of it."

THAT is a fine spirit, and there is much of it among the members of our Camp-Fire. I've often wished we could have something of the kind, yet there are disadvantages. A badge would be good, but just as sure as we had one a lot of people would think it merely a scheme for advertising the magazine. A number of you have suggested it and I've suggested that we adopt some emblem for our own, not as a badge but for use in our part of the magazine. Perhaps such an emblem, made into a very small badge, without a word or even a letter of printing on it, might solve the problem.

I'D LIKE to see such a badge in use, but not if it is going to seem merely a piece of advertising. Our Camp-Fire has been kept as free as possible from that sort of

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thing, the whole spirit of it is one of comradeship, not of exploitation, and I don't want to see it changed. It does help the magazine, of course, and of course I'm glad it does, but it doesn't spoil itself in doing so, and if a badge is going to put any "commercialism" in our Camp-Fire, then I'm against the badge.

Would a badge without any lettering on it do this? Or would it be an advantage only? Being the editor, I'm not going to decide. It's up to you. What do you think? If you're for a badge, what would make a good emblem?

A password or sign is hardly open to the same objection, but would it be abused by grafters at the expense of real members? And some, of course, are not strong for that kind of thing. Here again, what do you think?

And while we're thinking it over, let's send a "Good Luck" from the Camp-Fire to Comrade E. C. Johnson whose heart is in the right place.

SOME of you have already read in the San Francisco papers about Mrs. Catherine Casey's service flag and its four stars for her three sons and her son-in-law. The oldest boy, John Joseph, was an artist in France when the war broke out in 1914, put in three and a half years with the famous French Foreign Legion, declined a captaincy in the British army in order to stay with his old comrades, but later transferred to the American Army.

The original Legion and his comrades are gone and "Casey, the man with the charmed life," is one of the four survivors, says the *Chronicle*. Also, that a wound during the Champagne drive was the only one received during all his service, though he was four times cited for bravery.

The second and third stars are for Patrick and Terrence, our comrades of the writers' brigade, now with the Naval Reserve. The fourth star is for Lieutenant Homer Winfield.

DANIEL BOONE. It will always be a name to conjure by. Daniel Boone, Simon Kenton, Davy Crockett, Kit Carson, those names stand for an epoch of American history. In this issue we meet Daniel Boone and come to know him intimately. In coming stories by Hugh Pendexter we will come to know Boone still better, and, fighting side by side with him against the Indians in defense of the Kentucky frontier, that other great woodsman, more hated even than Boone by the Indians—Simon Kenton.

And, later still, it's likely you'll be meeting Crockett, and perhaps Carson as well.

Here is Mr. Pendexter's picture of Kentucky when it was the "dark and bloody ground."

Norway, Maine.

While not the first to visit the Kentucky country (first called the Transylvania Colony) there was none more persistent than Boone in taking families there to effect permanent settlements.

JOHN FINLEY, trapper, who incited him to go to Kentucky, had been there two years before the time of this story. N. S. Shaler's "History of Kentucky" states that the first authentic report of a trip to Kentucky was made by Dr. Thomas Walker, who crossed the mountains in 1750. The first white woman in Kentucky, according to Collins's "History of Kentucky," was Mrs. Mary Inglis, "who, in 1756, with her two little boys, her sister-in-law, Mrs. Draper, and others, were taken prisoners by the Shawnee Indians from her home on the top of the great Alleghany ridge, now Montgomery County, West Virginia." She was separated from her children, escaped. One child died in captivity, the other was ransomed after living with the Indians for thirteen years.

George Washington surveyed the northeast corner of Kentucky some time between 1770 and 1772. The historians lay stress on the great danger from the Indians that attended all these visits.

IT IS Shaler's theory that originally the eastward trend of the buffalo was encouraged by the Indians' destruction of the forests by repeated firing of the undergrowth. Thus he accounts for the five or six thousand square miles comprised in the "barrens," and adds that doubtless this same process was employed in deforesting the southwest; "only there the extermination of the woods was more complete." He also reminds that it takes some centuries of repeated firing to reduce beech and ash areas to conditions of treelessness.

Kentucky had no permanent Indian settlements, excepting some Chickasaw villages on the Mississippi, since the advent of the whites. The Cherokee drove out the Shawnees, once their neighbors and allies, and the two nations raised Cain generally in passing back and forth over the marvelous region.

The slight use I've made of the Cherokee sacred formulas is o. k. Every move of the Cherokees' lives, practically, was governed by some formula.—PENDEXTER.

LET'S have a look at another of the answers to Earl J. Teets who at one of our Camp-Fires complained because, though he'd led what you'd call an adventurous life, he didn't know what an adventure looked like. Comrade P. R. E. takes quite the opposite view of things, and probably more

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of us will agree with him than with comrade Teets.

DEAR SIR: April 8, 1918.

I feel sorry for Mr. Teets. To think that he has been to sea for ten years and has probably roamed a good portion of the waters at various times, and yet has not found adventure! Perhaps he has no imagination.

In my opinion you must have imagination to have adventure, and although I have never been to the so-called "out-of-the-way places" where one commonly thinks he will find adventure, I have a good imagination and I have adventures daily.

ADVENTURE, to me, is the unusual, the exciting, the unexpected, the humorous events or occurrences that come to you outside of the regular routine habits of your existence. In other words, an *ad*dition to an ordinary venture constitutes an *ad*venture.

I worked for two years in New York at the very unromantic job of department-store clerk, and while nothing startling ever befell me while there, I experienced many strange happenings that I would term adventures, though they may seem prosaic enough to those who have them in their daily lives always. I visited the dens and the cheap saloons of the city nightly (and there are plenty of such places in New York yet) merely to get a glimpse of the characters who frequent them, and was mixed in several rather bloody fights, which though not serious, were at least exciting to an ordinary day-in-day-out living clerk. I have seen bums of the worst order kicked out of some of the fancy saloons along Broadway, and have followed these unfortunates, spoken to them, taken them to a less particular bar and heard many interesting stories from their lips. Tame, perhaps, but unusual to me at least.

WITH nothing else to do at night I have set myself to follow a certain unknown individual whom I chanced to pass on the street, just to ascertain where he or she was going and what that person would do during the evening. I was curious, that is all, and while not looking for trouble, I would not have run away from it had it come to me.

Once I remember following a fashionably dressed young woman from the steps of an uptown brownstone house, through a maze of streets via subway, L and afoot, to the back room of a saloon on the East Side, where she sat and sipped the rank beer and wine served there until she was so drunk they carried her up-stairs to bed. There was nothing exciting about this either, but I wondered who she was and why she came down to this place from her fine home up-town simply to get drunk. And I tried to imagine what sort of story was in her life. I never found out, of course, but I would not have had even the opportunity to try had I gone home after work, eaten my supper and gone to bed.

NOW I am a newspaper editor in a country mining town, and small adventures crowd quickly to me every week. A fight or a killing by a gang of "hunks," train accidents, strikes, divorces, family fights, explosions—these are all adventures for me to get into and investigate and I enjoy them. Of course they are small compared with what the real adventurers of the world experience, but they will do for me for the present while I am in a section where "big" adventures do not happen often.

SO I say to Mr. Teets aboard his boat: Keep your eyes and your mind open and you'll find adventure, small perhaps, but adventure just the same. In a fog, when your commander is worrying his head off, do you ever imagine what *might* happen if another boat chanced to get in your path? Don't you ever visit out-of-the-way places on your shore leaves? Haven't you ever mixed with the rot that hangs around the sailors' lodging-houses and bars at every water-front? In your ten years at sea have you never had a fight for some cause, a mishap, or an encounter with a woman that has thrilled you with one or more of the primitive emotions of man?

If not, I pity you, because I know that you have missed much and that unless you learn that the prefix "Ad" means going "toward" the venture you will never find adventure.—P. R. E.

And also there is that very large question propounded by Edgar Young of our writers' brigade: "What, biologically speaking, is the spirit of adventure?" That is, what is this force, this impulse, that has, since before the dawn of history, moved man so mightily? For how much of human progress is it responsible?

SOME time ago there came this letter from a comrade in the 63d Artillery who found an old friend in a character in one of our stories:

Fort Worden, Wash.

It has been a long time since I have written you and after reading "Maloney and Matotte," by Robert Russell Strang, I just have to write, as my old friend Hungry Mike is in the story.

OLD Hungry Mike is quite a character and at one time was one of the best mushers in the North. Many a story has been told of Mike and some of his mushes and of the outfit he takes with him.

At the time of the Shushana strike, Mike, who is about sixty years old, put a pack on his back that did not go over twenty pounds, and that included his blankets and made the long Summer trip from Fairbanks to the Shushana. He started long after the first rush and was one of the first to reach the diggings.

MIKE is about 6 foot 4 inches and don't go over 130 pounds. From the top of his head to his toes he is a perfect curve and to look at him you would think that he was about to cash in at any time, but he is sure a tough old bird. Last Fourth of July the business men of Nenana, where Mike has an eating-house, played a game of baseball with the officials of the commission and Mike was on first base. Mike never caught a ball, but he stopped them all, sometimes with his head and sometimes with other parts of his body, but he was the life of the game.

Mike runs Mike's Place, an eating-house at Nenana, the interior end of the Alaskan Government Railroad, and, as he puts it, wants to run the

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best first-class, second-class eating-house in Alaska. —FRANCIS ROTCH, SR.

I sent his letter to Mr. Strang and here is his reply:

Groton, Mass.

I am in receipt of your note and the letter from Mr. Rotch of Fort Worden in regard to Hungry Mike Noonan—I guss I am one of the few men who know his full name. I am very glad to know that Mike is still on top.

I FIRST met him on Gold Run Creek in the Klondike region back in 1901. We have crossed paths many times in Alaska since then. The last time I saw him was in the Summer of 1910. He worked for me for a few days in Chena at that time. One morning he jumped on board a down-river steamboat bound for the Iditerod.

Mike is a great stampeder and a fast musher as Mr. Rotch testifies. His success is due to the fact that he splits the air like an elongated razor-blade. I can see him now with his bony elbow on the lunch-counter, and hear him wheeze:

"Yes, sir, gentlemen, I've cooked in every State in the Union except Delaware, and I spent a week and went broke trying to land in *it*, but couldn't make it. Next time I go back East I'm gonna *walk* into it, so as to be sure I won't miss it."

I HAVE also heard him declare "Gentlemen, during the World's Fair in Chicago I ran the biggest hot-cake dump in the city. The floor was half the size of a city block and there were gas-heated hot-plates all around three sides of it. I had twenty wenches doing nothing but frying, and they were kept so busy doing that that they had no time to grease the top of the range, so I got a big buck who wore a size fifteen boot, and to the sole of each boot I strapped a side of bacon, first having cut the skin off. After that it was easy, for all he had to do was to skate from one end of the hot-plate to the other, the girls pouring the hot-cakes behind him."

I WAS in one of the first parties to leave Fairbanks on the Shushanna stampede. It was a bad one, about four hundred miles across country. Mike must have arrived there after I left, because I didn't see him. Anyway, the strike turned out to be a small affair. But there is sufficient copper in that district to keep the world going for generations. Mountain sheep and caribou are plentiful.

Mike deserves a rich claim, because he's been doing the pioneer stunt for forty years. I don't believe there's a mining-camp west of Cripple Creek, Col., that he hasn't taken a fling at. I hope he gets stampeding out of his head and sticks to his place in Nanana. Mike is a good cook and a white man, and one of these days I'll give him the center of the stage in a yarn.—R. R. STRANG.

WELL, Americans, how do you like this? And what are you going to do about it? What are *you* going to do about it?

Lordsburg, N. M.

My business takes me all over the entire Western States. On my last trip, which consumed two years from the time I left San Francisco until I returned to that city, I took in every village and hamlet of ten States, exclusive of British Columbia, and I want to tell you now, as I have told others previously, that I saw in some places things that make an honest, stanch, true, patriotic citizen sit up and take notice and ask questions regarding the whys and wherefores of same.

IN NORTH and South Dakota I traveled for hundreds of miles in entirely German communities, where few, if any, spoke the American language to say nothing of their inability to read it. The churches were German. The schools were German. The papers were German. The people of these communities were strictly and entirely German and pro-German in all their inclinations and activities.

I met hundreds and hundreds of prominent men —citizens of the United States—bankers, merchants, school-teachers, clergymen and doctors, who had lived in those communities for more than twenty years, who had raised families and amassed fortunes there, who could not speak or read English. Some of them were good Masons; most of them professed to be good, loyal and true American citizens; and yet I have found in my intercourse with them that they were out-and-out Germans—Germans in their talk and ideas, Germans in their sympathies and affiliations, and that they would fight at the drop of the hat for the German Kaiser and the German Fatherland. And mind you it was in many instances to get away from the hardships and penury of the one, and the impositions and restrictions imposed by the other, that these same men left Germany to come and settle among us.

Mind you, I am not saying that there are not a great many true and loyal patriotic German-Americans in this country. Without doubt there are hundreds of thousands of such. But I am simply drawing attention to the thousands of others who are not loyal and patriotic Americans, who are more German than American, who would be spies and traitors to this country to help out the Kaiser and the Fatherland, and who, as such, are liable to be classed in and take refuge with the others who are good and true. And therein lies one great big menace for us.

NOW I maintain that no foreign-born person should be admitted to the rights and privileges of American citizenship who can not intelligently speak, read and write the American language. To do this each one will naturally have to live here a certain length of time, and he will just as naturally have to associate with true Americans and imbibe in a measure from them American ideas and principles and American conduct and deportment. To this end we should protest against the general speaking of a foreign language in communities of foreign emigrants. We should particularly prohibit the teaching in the public schools of foreign languages exclusively in such communities, and the publication of newspapers in foreign languages. In this way these foreigners in our midst will be compelled to study our language and customs, and they will gradually be weaned away from former ideas and affiliations and imbued with new ideas of patriotism and loyalty to this land of their adoption—the land of the brave and the free.—T. W. DUNCAN.

ABOUT the time this reaches you the Fourth Liberty Loan will be launched. Whatever German propagandists, conscious or unconscious, may say, this is a war for

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the American people, for the safety and welfare of all of us. Therefore it is up to each of us to do his full part. Therefore it is up to each of us to buy all the Liberty Bonds he can. It is just as simple as that.

Metal Identification Cards Now Ready.

MANUFACTURER'S cost to us 20½ cents. Cost to you, including postage, 25 cents. State present card number, if any. For other requirements, see page 185.

WORD from our old comrade of the writers' brigade, Major W. Robert Foran, written months ago. He has had four years of war now, having served, as you will remember, on the French front before being sent to England, then India and finally Mesopotamia.

The Royal Berkshire Regt.,
Att'd 6th Bn. South Lanes Regt.,
Mesopotamia Expd. Force.

Letters to and from America do take an infernal age to reach their destination!

The show out here is practically all over. Johnny Turks bolt as we advance. We have had three or four small brushes with him since last Summer, but no show since early in December. It is deadly dull and quiet out here.

It is great to hear America is going so strongly into this war and I hope it will hasten the victorious end.

Have been keeping fairly fit out here except that I can't get rid of this beastly muscular rheumatism. At times I suffer very acutely from it. I have had about two years of it now and am very fed up with the continual pain.

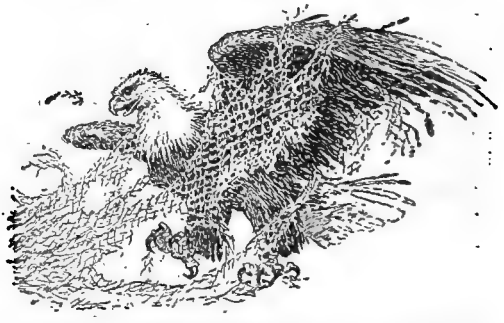
My latest news is that my wife and the two wee daughters are very flourishing and well. I am longing to be with them again. It is near a year now since I left England.

Kindest remembrances to every one whom I know.—W. ROBERT FORAN.

ONE of our comrades of our writers' brigade has had hard luck. C. M. Cosby, a former soldier in the Philippines, wrote me the other day as follows:

The medicos got me on a potential disability in the last ten days of training, which accounts for the fact that I am writing from New York instead of an Army camp where I had hoped to be. The result was so unexpected that a recommendation for captaincy had to be canceled by telegraph.

FIGHTING THE HUN WEB



A department devoted to throwing light upon the Actual working of the subtle German propaganda in the United States, Canada and the other Allied countries. Every time you discover one of the strands of this web, tell the rest of us about it, briefly but clearly. Once seen, it loses its dangerous power.

EDITORIAL NOTE. *Until there has been time to receive and print items from our readers the work will be carried on by items from the staff and their personal friends together with such warnings as come in spontaneously even before this department has made its first appearance.*

HERE'S a letter from a man I know personally, setting forth the dangerous Hun propaganda caught in the very act. It shows in the letter from another man known to both of us—an American officer whose loyalty is above suspicion and whose intelligence is of the highest, yet who has unwittingly been caught in the hidden Hun web and become one of the Hun's unconscious tools working hard to accomplish just what the Hun wants accomplished.

Think it over. The Hun web takes a loyal American soldier offering his life on the battle-field in earnest endeavor to kill the Hun and, without the American's even suspecting it, makes him into a cog in the

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Hun machine, sets him to Hun work, busies him in sowing Hun seeds back in America three thousand miles away. Think of the hideous subtlety of it. The system that can do that calls for our utmost watchfulness to frustrate its hidden purposes.

THE man who tells of it did not know of this new department of ours. It had not yet appeared when he wrote. But he saw the need of publicity in order to meet this hidden Hun drive.

And if you'll remember, the Hun U-boats off our coast followed similar tactics, treating the crews of sunk vessels with such suspicious courtesy that our Government scented danger of some kind and wisely issued warnings against any souvenirs from the submarines lest they be impregnated with disease.

YOU don't pick up a snake and pet him just because he wags his tail. It's equally foolish and suicidal to let down your guard against a treacherous, ravishing, baby-killing, crucifying Hun just because he ostentatiously (and only on certain carefully chosen occasions) treats the wounded decently or is polite to a sailor whose ship he's sunk. A snake is a snake, a Hun is a Hun. Always. And they're very much the same thing. The only essential difference is that the snake does not wag a friendly tail in order to get close enough to kill you, being a more open fighter than the Hun and playing the game according to the rules Nature has laid down for him. You can trust a snake up to a certain extent. You can't trust a Hun at all. And least of all when he's pretending to be friendly.—A. S. H.

UNLESS my medicine is entirely wrong the coming German peace offensive will include one of the smoothest, slickest bits of propaganda here in these United States that has ever been pulled; and it will be American soldiers who will unwittingly start it going. In a long and very interesting letter from —— he speaks of a counter-attack, before which the Huns fell back.

"And what do you suppose this Hun did? (Used collectively.) He left all the American wounded blanketed, dressed their wounds, and gave them hot coffee and cigaretes. Officers engaged told me that they did not know of a single case where Fritz bayoneted a man who had gone down wounded."

A FEW pages further on, speaking of a sortie to rescue an American wounded and to bring in a German, also wounded. "Incidentally, this was a very game little Hun.

"Though much more severely wounded than our own man he had crawled to him and bound up his leg. One of the first things our man said to me when I talked with him in the dressing station, 'Did they go out and get that Fritzie, Lieutenant? I hope so 'cause he's a gamester, and he sure was —— good to me. I'm the one that did him in with my automatic rifle, too, and he knew it.' When Fritzie did come in he was treated like a lost comrade, rather than an enemy."

—— was amazed and pleased to find kind-hearted Huns. I have written him, quoting "When the devil was sick," etc., and asking him to remember the English nurse, Edith Cavell, Captain Fryatt, the irrefragable proof of damnable treatment of prisoners, compiled by the British commission and about to be published in a White Book, already forecast by Cobb in the *Saturday Evening Post*, and a million and one acts of bestiality, rape, etc.

HERE is where it concerns us. Any one with half an eye can foresee the effect on this country if a few thousand soldiers should write home instances of a similar nature. Thousands of parents would tell their neighbors, "My boy says he captured a German boy, not any older'n him. The poor thing was about starved and my boy gave him food and some tobacco. My boy says he's awful glad he didn't kill him, etc."

Along booms Germany's most strenuous peace drive. Thousands of parents and their neighbors remember what the boys wrote concerning gentle Germans. And then from one end to the other come honest queries, "Why don't we stop if they've got enough? Our boys say they ain't all bad. The old Kaiser's to blame and he'll die soon." And you can vision the rest.

It will be mighty in effect, for it will come from the heart. It will emanate from our own. Any appeal addressed to our reason can be diagnosed and laughed at. But let——'s excerpts be repeated in two or three thousand letters and a peace howl will go up to high heaven.

NOW why should I inflict all this on you? Because it's your war as well as mine, but that's a minor reason. Some of this stuff will come to you in some way; with the source thoroughly innocent and intensely patriotic. Can't you sound a warning against it, editorially in *Adventure*? A —— of a long trail before bringing you in sight of my smoke. I knew no other way to do just now. Later I may start some newspaper publicity against it if I have proof it's recurrent. The effect scored on—— was scored on others. Of course I don't want to bring him into it, and my letter will open his eyes, I know. But, boy, howdy! The snake is there and must be scotched just as sure as apples is apples. And if the Huns can put it over they've played their highest trump.—HUGH PENDEXTER.

THERE is nothing too high or too low for the German propagandist to use as a medium to spread his lies. One of the favorite games is religion.

After the European War broke out in 1914 there was a marvelous increase in German religious zeal in this country. Camp-meeting tents, in which the services held nightly were conducted in German, sprang up within a mile or two of each other. And the services in these tents were one-quarter religious

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and three-quarters *"Hoch der Kaiser."* Even Germans quit one of these places, operating in my neighborhood, in disgust after the first meeting.

Most of these "religious" organizations have closed down since the United States declared war but some are still operating and need watching as do any meetings conducted in the German language.—J. R. ELTON, JAMAICA, L. I.

THE German propagandists, conscious and unconscious, can no longer boost the Kaiser's game by shouting for peace or by slandering the Allies. But it's not against the law to bellow "Rough Deal!" so they bellow it. One section of the country is being discriminated against in favor of another in various ways—by being called on for more than its quota of drafted men, by suffering from more drastic regulation of its products, etc. Pah! Spit on the liar who whispers such things.—V. W. NASH, BROOKLYN.

THE report that the Government will seize all or part of the food which careful and patriotic housewives are canning has caused a great deal of worry among thoughtless people. Nothing could be more false than this Huntruth. Food will win the war, and stories which discourage its careful preservation are among the most vicious forms of German propaganda.—J. E. COX.

LOOKING AHEAD

"Win the War but Get Ready for Peace"

No matter how long the war lasts it is our first duty during that time to work unrelentingly for victory. But we have a second duty. In peace we failed to prepare for war. In war we must not fail to prepare for peace.

To help in meeting this second duty while we are meeting the first, *Adventure* has instituted this department. Its main purpose is to direct our readers' attention more definitely to the many problems America will face when peace comes and to offer an open forum for exchange of views.

In order to hear from as many as possible each expression of opinion must be limited to not more than one hundred and fifty words at most. Merely state the problem that, to you, seems most urgent, adding briefly if you like, your idea of the right solution. The department's value lies in the opinions taken as a whole, not in any one of them.

"Looking Ahead" is not a place for editorial opinion. It is a forum for the opinions of as many as possible; its office is to seek the consensus of those opinions as a guide and stimulus to all. The editors will do their honest best to make the selection for publication as closely as possible indicative of the proportionate importance given the various problems and suggestions by the Americans of all classes and conditions who read our magazine.

It is up to you as an American to do your part. If you haven't thought about these things, think now. Then tell us what you think.

All contributions must be signed, with address given. Only initials will be printed if you insist, but the nation's problems are matters on which an American should not be afraid to speak over his own name.

(Since a magazine is made up ahead, it will be several issues before there can be time to receive, put into type and give you the replies from readers in response to these first appearances of this Department. Send yours in now.)

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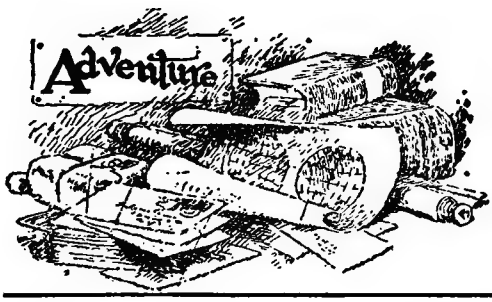

VARIOUS PRACTICAL SERVICES FREE TO ANY READER

THESE services of *Adventure* are free to *any one*. They involve much time, work and expense on our part, but we offer them gladly and ask in return only that you *read and observe the simple rules*, thus saving needless delay and trouble for you and us. The whole spirit of this magazine is one of friendliness. No formality between editors and readers. Whenever we *can* help you we're ready and willing to try.

Identification Cards

Free to any reader. Just send us (1) your name and address, (2) name and address of party to be notified, (3) a stamped and self-addressed return envelope.

Each card bears this inscription, each printed in English, French, Spanish, German, Portuguese, Dutch, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Japanese:

"In case of death or serious emergency to bearer, address serial number of this card, care of *Adventure*, New York, stating full particulars, and friends will be notified."

In our office, under each serial number, will be registered the name of bearer and of one or two friends, with permanent address of each. No name appears on the card. Letters will be forwarded to friend, unopened by us. Names and addresses treated as confidential. We assume no other obligations. Cards not for business identification. Cards furnished free *provided stamped and addressed envelope accompanies application*. We reserve the right to use our own discretion in all matters pertaining to these cards.

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A moment's thought will show the value of this system of card-identification for any one, whether in civilization or out of it. Remember to furnish stamped and addressed envelope and to *give in full the names and addresses of self and friend or friends when applying.*

Back Issues of *Adventure*

WILL BUY—November, 1910; March, 1911; October, 1911; May, 1911; June, 1914; June, 1915; June, 1916; Mid-March, 1918. State price.—H. G. BARNES, BOX 141, St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada.

Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

General Questions from Readers

In addition to our free service department "Ask Adventure" on the pages following, *Adventure* can sometimes answer other questions within our general field. When it can, it will. Expeditions and employment excepted.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Letter-Friends Back Home

A Free Service Department for American, Canadian, and Other Allied Soldiers, Sailors, Marines and Others in Camp at the Front, or in Hospital.

Any one in the United States or Allied service who wishes to brighten the time with letters from "back home" or wherever else this magazine circulates, and with the personal touch and interest of hitherto unknown friends, can secure these letters and these friends by sending us his name and military address to be published once in this department as soon as censorship of soldiers' foreign addresses permits. In the meantime his address can be printed as "care *Adventure*," letters to be forwarded at once by us to the military address he gives us in confidence. Among our readers of both sexes, all classes and from all parts of the world, he is likely to gain a number of friendly, personal correspondents. He is free to answer only such as he is comfortably able to answer under the conditions that surround him, and it is even suggested that the number of correspondents for any one man be determined by the needs of his comrades as well as by his own.

This magazine, of course, assumes no responsibility other than the publishing of these names and addresses as its space will permit. Experience has shown that the service offered is a very real and needed one, and all not themselves in service are asked to do their part in making the daily life of those fighting in our defense brighter and pleasanter through personal friendships across the intervening miles and by whatever personal, human kindnesses such friendships may suggest.

When giving your military address make it as permanent a one as possible.

PVT. CLIFFORD F. GRANES, care of *Adventure*.

PVT. FRANK SILVA, care of *Adventure*.

SAM P. COWEN, U.S.S. *Kentucky*, care of Postmaster, New York.

ERNEST SUPRENANT, 70th Co. C. A. C., Fort Amador, C. Z.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1302 N St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

American Defense Society, Inc.—An organization working systematically for real Americanism and furthering the winning of the war by watchfulness and effort at the right point. Address 44 East 23d Street, New York City.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
B. W. BRINTNALL, 5527 33d Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, care Authors' League of America, Aeolian Hall, New York. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S. should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brintnall.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay: river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; furs, fresh-water pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

8. Western U. S. Part 2
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, Yankton, S. Dak. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially*, early history of Missouri valley.

9. Western U. S. Part 3 and Mexico Part 1
J. W. ROBERTSON, 912 W. Lynn Street, Austin, Texas. Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

10. Mexico Part 2
J. W. WHITEAKER, Cedar Park, Texas. Covering Central and Southern Mexico below a line drawn from Tampico to Mazatlan. History, geography, customs, government, animals, minerals, products and industries. (Mr. Whiteaker is now serving with our army in France. His department is accordingly in abeyance until we find a suitable successor.)

11. North American Snow Countries Part 1
ROBERT E. PINKERTON, 5036 Utica St., Denver, Colo. Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. Ry. Canoes and snowshoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

12. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

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13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Burlington, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food, physics, hygiene; mountain work.

16. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, Honolulu, T. H. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

17. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, Nitro, West Va. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. The Balkans
ARTHUR D. HOWDEN SMITH, *Evening Post*, 20 Vesey St., New York City. Covering Rumania, Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Turkey (in Europe); travel, sport, customs, language, local conditions, markets, industries.

19. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports: hunting, trading, traveling.

20. Japan and Korea
ROBERT WELLES RITCHIE, Mountain Lakes, N. J. Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios.

21. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U. S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus; Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade, curios.

22. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, 724 North 3d St., Reading, Pa. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses, outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

23. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Castle View, Meriden, Conn. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

24. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

25. Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, care Authors' League of America, 33 West 42d St., New York. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, mining, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

26. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

27. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT GOLDIE, 1106 Van Nuys Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba. Or J. V. Knight, Director, Republic of Cuba News Bureau, Woolworth Building, New York.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

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The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Capt. A. M. Lochwitzky.

More about the Jivaros

AWAY back in the first May issue this department contained an account of the Jivaro Indians, that mysterious, little-known tribe of cannibals whose specialty is head-hunting in the wilds of Ecuador and Peru. Fantastic savages, who kill their enemies with poison that does not spoil the eating qualities of the meat, and who then preserve the top-pieces of their victims by a process which shrinks the bones and features till the relics are reduced to the size of an orange. That account, written by Mr. Young from personal experience, aroused an interest which has brought to light further facts—disclosures—rumors, gossip, and what-not.

Of all these letters, perhaps the most stimulating is that received by Mr. Young from Walter R. Johnson, formerly of the South-American jungle and now of New York City.

Mr. Johnson's letter, with Mr. Young's reply, follows:

Question:—"Dear Sir and Friend—I have been in the United States since October and as it is the first time in eighteen years everything seems strange to me and I find it hard to get used to things. It's the jungles for me every time; it's safer to dodge poisoned arrows from a bad Indian than to try and cross Fifth Avenue on an afternoon. I tried to get into the Army here and get over in France where there is some life but on account of having several lead souvenirs of those Central-American revolutions, in my body, they turned me down, so guess it's back to Ecuador for me.

"Since I met you in Panama have made two trips from Ecuador into the upper Amazon River country, one from Quito to the headwaters of the Napo and down it to the Amazon, and the other I went in from Rio Bamba and down to Equitos, both very interesting trips.

"As for the Jivaro Indians I have made several trips into their country and have several notebooks filled with my translations of their language and customs. As theirs is not a written language the spelling is my own, and if you wish to borrow them will gladly loan them to you.

"These Indians are entirely different from any other wild tribes of South America and they have a striking resemblance both in features and language to

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the ahcient Inca Indian race at the time of the Spanish conquest of Peru and my idea is that they are descendants of a part of the old Inca race.

"There is an old tradition floating around Ecuador that at the Spanish conquest of Quito, the northern capital of the old Incas, the Inca king and several thousand of his finest warriors, rather than surrender to the Spanish, took their families and went over the mountains and into the upper Amazon River country.

"There is also an old tradition that there is a lost city out in the upper Amazon country and that no one has ever been able to reach it.

"I, myself, although on very friendly terms with the several different tribes of these Jivaro Indians, and being always cordially received by them, have never been able to win their consent to penetrate further than a certain point into their country.

"I know for a fact that all of these Jivaro Indian chiefs are subjects of a higher chief further in, and some day the truth will be known that there is a capital of the old Inca race still intact with a blood descendant of the old Incas still ruling them.

"The little Indian child that I brought out and whom you know so well is a pure-blood Jivaro Indian and I believe is the only one that ever came out.

"Now, *amigo*, if these civilized countries have not taken all the red sap out of your blood and if you can still handle a gun as well as you could several years ago, what do you say we get together and visit this lost town? As far as I am concerned would just as soon get killed by an Indian as to get run over by an automobile; it's easier. Well, *adios, amigo mio*."—WALTER R. JOHNSON, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—DEAR FRIEND JOHNSON:—I read your letter with interest. I have referred several friends of "Ask Adventure" to you direct.

I am up to my eyes in war work and will probably be here for a couple of months yet, but will look in on you when I get back to New York, and we can probably dope up something together; perhaps we may be able to work up an expedition back into the Jivaro country. When we get together we can "get it out of our system" in good shape, which is hard to do by letter.

I am certainly glad I have been able to locate you through the medium of *Adventure* and look forward to the time I shall arrive in New York.

A Word Concerning the Incas

AND now that Mr. Johnson has raised the subject of the Incas, the following correspondence turns out to be pertinent as well as interesting. It may be observed that Captain Dingle's statements apparently don't jibe with Mr. Johnson's. If any controversy follows I'll let them—and you—fight it out. The letters:

Question:—"I should like to know something about the Incas of Peru; origin, history, customs; how they lived; extent of their kingdom; if any of their descendants still live. Was 'Inca' the name, or the title of the king, or was it the name of the royal family, etc.? In short, should like to know as much about them as you can tell me. If this is published please do not publish own name."— ——, East Alburgh, Vermont.

Answer, by Captain Dingle:—The subject of the Peruvian Incas can scarcely be scratched in the compass of a letter. To the best of my knowledge the Inca was the ruler, and not a specific person or family—the emperor, in fact. Peruvian tradition has it that in remote ages there came to Peru two Children of the Sun, who planted wisdom and civilization in the people. From these mythical Children of the Sun, the Incas—first line—descended.

Under the Incas, in line with the above tradition, the entire produce of the nation was divided into three portions: one going to the Sun (the Deity), one to the Inca, the rest to the people. The extent of the empire was vast, and ruled with a sort of combination of absolutism and socialism.

The people's share of the produce was apportioned according to rank and needs; couples were married at the wish or decision of the governing class, and house and land supplied them. It was impossible for a low-born to become an aristocrat or to rise to power in any way; but at the same time it was impossible for the meanest subject to drop into want.

The state as a whole almost parallels the Roman Empire in its best days, since far-distant tribes were governed and kept in more or less peaceable subjection by the chiefs by force of arms and the introduction of civilization whether desired or not.

But by far the better way for you to learn the entire story of these people would be for you to get from any good book store the "History of the Conquest of Peru," written by William Hickling Prescott. For me to attempt to tell you a satisfying story would be aiming at the grotesquely impossible. A book, not a letter, would be needed, and not a small book either.

Not This One

MOST people figure a Government job as one in which a ledgerman drowses at a desk from nine to four. But not all of them are like that. For instance:

Question:—"I would like for you to tell me how and where to get a position on the forest range, either in your State or some other one. I have heard that during the Summer months lookouts and other men without forestry experience are needed on the ranges.

"I have three years' college credits, next year getting my degree. Am twenty-one years of age, five feet ten inches and weigh one hundred and seventy-five pounds, and in perfect health."—TOM SEMON, Franklin, Indiana.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—To get a position as lookout or forest guard, the only positions in the forest service that do not require technical knowledge, apply to the district forester. For California, apply to him at Federal Building, Los Angeles, or 114 Sansome Street, San Francisco.

For New Mexico apply at Albuquerque. He can give you information about Arizona and Utah, also. Other places are Portland, Oregon; Missoula, Montana; and Denver.

The forest service pays a lookout man about sixty-five dollars a month and grub. He roosts in a little hut on top of a high peak, all by his lonely, and watches through its glass sides for the first puff of smoke. It is a lonesome job, but interesting if a fellow cares for the mountains.

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A forest guard fights fires, cuts fire-breaks over some of the high ridges and down through cañons. Acts as general roustabout for the foresters and rangers.

I know of no job that brings out the manhood of a chap in any better style than working in the forest service. A chap just has to be alert, full of courage, courteous to every one he meets, industrious and clean living. He won't last any longer than a drop of water on hot iron otherwise.

I hope you get your job. Let me know how you came out.

Brass Tacks, Please!

THE subjoined pair of letters are important for two reasons: they emphasize the fact that this department is free, and also that in order to get the utmost use out of it, the inquirer must make his questions clear and to the point. Yes, we've said this before, but maybe it was before some of you new fellows came in:

Question:—"In *Adventure* I noticed an ad about how to get information about New Zealand, Cook Island and Samoa, with your address inclosed. Kindly send me information about conditions in general. And state if it is free or to be paid for."—H. WIRTANEN, Washington, District of Columbia.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—The information furnished by all the editors of the "Ask Adventure" section of this magazine is given "free, gratis, and for nothing"—to put it as explicitly as I know how. But please do you and all intending inquirers be as explicit as possible. Ask definite questions.

What is it that you want to know about New Zealand, the Cook Islands, and Samoa? A bookful could be written anent "conditions in general." There is such a vast difference in the life in New Zealand, where it is as strenuously busy in the pursuit of the dollar as in your own country, and in the life of the Cook Islands, where the natives take it easy and the Europeans easier, and in Samoa, where the heat enervates, for it is on the Equator while New Zealand is in the Temperate Zone. Let me have definite, distinct questions, and you shall have your answers. Sincerely and with best wishes.

Definition Wanted

WHAT *is* an unexplored country, anyway? Is it a country that no civilized man has penetrated, or is it one which hasn't yet been subjected to scientific examination? The questions arise from a reading of the letters below:

Question:—"As a matter of curiosity would like to know how much of the information in the enclosed clipping is authentic.

UNEXPLORED CANADA

It is believed that nearly thirty per cent. of Canada is still undiscovered, and if Indian reports are to be believed there is in the basin of the Mackenzie River one of the largest areas of possible oil-bearing country on the face of the earth. The Indians report the existence of lakes a hundred miles long in Yukon that no white man has ever seen, while even the Indians apparently know nothing of the as yet untrodden Mackenzie mountains.

—FRED G. LEWIS, Lockport, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—The word "undiscovered" used in the clipping you sent me seems rather badly chosen; unexplored would be better. And the percentage seems a trifle erroneous. About twenty per cent. would be nearer the mark.

Of course, it is merely guesswork to say that no white man has ever seen this and that. There are hundreds of wandering prospectors and hunters who keep no record of their travels and who pass through a country without seeing much of anything.

I have talked with men who had been to the headwaters of certain streams and all they could tell you was that the paddling was hard or easy as the case might be. They could also tell about the game they actually saw; but as to the topography of the surrounding country, the fertility of the soil or even the actual distance traveled, they were decidedly unreliable, to put it charitably.

These men were not without good sense nor were they averse to giving information. They simply had not seen. Like a man who whips a trout-stream for hours with fair success and suddenly discovers that he is much farther from home than he realized, the mind is centered on something else to the exclusion of matters which would strike another as extraordinary.

As an instance of "where no white man has ever been before," I once was on the shores of a lake which seemed to be in that class, and there I ran across an empty spool of a kodak film!

These trifles are side issues, however, and I would say in reply to your question that the item is in the main reliable.

About the Cajack

VERILY, the wants of man be manifold. (No joke intended; none made, in fact.) Why should anybody other than an Eskimo want a cajack? But here's a friend who does:

Question:—"Could you kindly tell me where I could buy a cajack boat? If I can not buy one, could you give me an idea how to make one, the materials I should use and a rough diagram."—JOHN B. SNYDER, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Spears:—The cajack, kajak, kyak, etc., is an Eskimo sea-going boat with a frame of bones and sticks, tied together with sinew, and it is the tippiest craft in the world. If you will go to the Museum of Natural History on the upper west side in New York, you will find full-size boats and models of this craft, which will serve you better than any diagram or rough sketch.

I am not sure but what you could find one for sale through the Ethnological Department of that museum, or through the Smithsonian Institution, in Washington.

Generally speaking, the kyak, or cajack, is of the dory model, sharp at both ends, narrow and long. It is all decked over, however, and has a manhole in which the rider sits to paddle, and the Eskimo with a twitch of his paddle turns the boat clear over, and comes up on the other side like a knot on a log.

There are dozens of salt-water boats with a resemblance to the kajak that can be traced in model,

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—the caique of the Bosporus Strait, in Turkey, rowed by oars, for example; the Gloucester dory, the Venetian gondola.

If you use heavy, water-proofed canvas and a wider beam, and a canoe-bottom model, with a light, hardwood frame, you can evolve a first-class white man's boat from the Eskimo kayak; or kajak; but I believe only one white man, a Dane in Arsuk Fjord, Greenland, ever succeeded in sitting up in an unmodified Eskimo kyak because of the model—but an Eskimo rides gales in one of them. The boat turns over and leaves the white man head downward in the water.

Travel in Upper Congo

THIS inquirer puts thirteen questions to our expert with regards to people and things in that region of Africa made famous by Stanley and Livingstone. Here's hoping the number of his queries won't hoodoo his expedition:

Question:—"I am a young man interested in taking a trip to the Upper Congo in Africa, and would like the following information—

"1.—What are the opportunities for adventure?

"2.—How are the customs and living conditions?

"3.—What are the chances for big-game hunting?

"4.—What kind of an outfit should be taken?

"5.—Are there any working opportunities?

"6.—What kind of languages must one have at command?

"7.—Is witchcraft in practise yet in Africa?

"8.—Where could I get a map of Africa?

"9.—How much is the fare from New York?

"10.—Which is the best way to go from New York?

"11.—What are the methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence?

"12.—What is the best remedy for poison-snake bites?

"13.—Could outfits be bought in Africa?"—WILLIAM F. FESER, Brooklyn, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Beadle:—

1.—Every chance for adventure with animals and man, crocodiles and flies.

2.—I take it you mean white man's customs. Practically only Belgian officials in the country (who are composed of nearly every nationality in Europe). You carry your own chow, canned goods; live on them, chickens and eggs (when you can) and game (when you can). There are no stores in Upper Congo as all trading is governmental.

3.—One of the finest elephant countries in Africa; also large game of all descriptions. But all game is preserved. You have to get a special license for elephant. As far as I recollect the license is about the same as on the British side: two hundred and fifty dollars for two male elephants, which carries with it about two of every species of buck.

4.—See Answer 13.

5.—Practically none. Both jobs on the Kilo mines and all others are given (or were) from Brussels.

6.—French absolutely necessary; if staying in country have to learn Kiswahili, otherwise you will always be at the mercy of a highly paid interpreter.

7.—Yes. Not to the extent that it was in districts that are under immediate white supervision; but there are vast tracts that are not.

8.—New York Public Library; to buy one go to Brentano's and ask for section maps of Upper Congo. The French are the best.

9.—Impossible to say as all steamship prices are altered now. But remember that after reaching the mouth of the Congo you have half a thousand miles by river-boat to Stanleyville or some other jumping-off place and then another half a thousand through the forests. To get to the Upper Congo that way I should say roughly would swallow most of the small change out of five hundred dollars. If you went round to the east coast, up the Uganda Railway and across Uganda the trip would be easier but not less expensive.

10.—Again impossible to say in present conditions. If possible go to the Canaries and get a Holt or Elder-Dempster boat down the coast. Rest of the trip answered in 9.

11.—There is no Winter or Summer in tropics as we know them here. Two rainy seasons, but temperature much alike all the year 'round. Rest answered in 2.

12.—I don't know of any sure remedy. Sometimes alcohol will pull a man through; chief endeavor is to keep him awake at all costs.

13 (and 4).—Rot-proof tent, camp-bed and bar, medicine-chest, helmet or Tirai hat, usual tropic whites and khaki hunting-clothes, battery of light and heavy rifle, revolver are the chief points. On east, north, and south coasts you can buy outfits, and I suppose on the west, although I can not say for sure as I have never been there. Ask Mr. Miller, Section 22 of "Ask Adventure" if you intend to go.

Hope this is useful to you although I'm afraid that it isn't very encouraging.

Lumbering in B. C.

Question:—"Will you kindly give me some information regarding the lumbering conditions of British Columbia?

"I am tired of the East and wish for new fields of adventure. Or, in other words the *wanderlust* is in my blood.

"A disabled hand keeps me from entering either the Army or Navy branch of the government service.

"I am a very good four-horse teamster and would like to know if there is a demand for such, also the pay and board such men receive.

"I am over six feet and weigh one hundred and ninety-five pounds and am used to roughing it."—EDWIN B. TEMPLE, Albany, New York.

Answer, by Mr. Carson:—Teamsters are always in demand and the wages good. Any sort of labor here demands at least fifty cents per hour while board is generally about seven and a half dollars per week or even less. I may add that the board furnished by the logging companies is better than that of the average hotel. They have to feed to hold their men.

Help is so scarce in the lumbering camps that large numbers of soldiers drafted for the Army have been detailed to work in the woods. These men draw extra pay for their services and are under a certain amount of military discipline, but on the whole have rather a good time of it. This alone is sufficient to show how great the need of help is here.

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HOW TO HELP WIN THE WAR

A Department Telling What *YOU* Can Do And How to Find Out about It

To make such a department comprehensive, reliable and up to date entails much work and considerable machinery. Since this machinery has already been created and put into operation, *Adventure* can render service most efficiently by giving its readers the use of this practical agency for connecting individual willingness with national needs.

***Adventure's* big brother, *Everybody's Magazine*, now conducts a "War Service Guide."**

There are thousands of good Americans who, with all their hearts, want to help in the big job at hand, but do not know what to do or how to find it and it is these patriots which *Everybody's* "Guide" wants to help enlist where they can be of real service. If you are one of them, write to Mr. Hoyt, care of *Everybody's* "Guide," Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City. Tell him your circumstances and your qualifications—whether you are looking for volunteer or paid work, whether you can give all or part time, in your home town only or anywhere the job may call you. Give him all the data he may need to judge what work you might do. There are "bits" to be done in farm and industrial work, in various relief organizations and in the Government offices as well as in the Army and Navy.

***Everybody's* "Guide" will also be glad to tackle any question of allowance or allotment, Government insurance or legal status growing out of the new and closer relationship which many are forming with Uncle Sam. Let *Everybody's* "Guide" try to help you.**

Do YOUR Part

Find out what to do and how to do it by writing to *Everybody's* "War Service Guide," Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada.

ANDERSON, JOHAN EMIL. (Brother.) Last heard of in New Britain and Branford, Conn., about 24 years ago. Age 50. Would greatly appreciate any information regarding him.—Address MISS ADELINE JOHNSON, care Mrs. Bowen, Brookholt, Hempstead, Long Island.

CHIPMAN ——. Corporal in K Company at time of declaration of war with Germany in 1917. Later discharged because of dependents. When last heard of was living in Westfield, Mass.—Address PTE. C. M. ALEXANDER, care of *Adventure.*

VAN SICKLE, W. D. We are anxious to get in touch with you. Important news. Write at once. No reason, as far as conditions here go, for keeping whereabouts secret.—Address R. B. VAN SICKLE, 55 Paterson St., New Brunswick, N. J.

HART, FRANK J., 33 years old, about 5 ft. 6 in., fair complexion. Last seen Summer of 1916 in Marion, Indiana. Was traveling salesman for a motor power company. Please forward any information to his mother —MRS. LOUISE G. HART, 740 Clove Road, West New Brighton, N. Y.

WASHBROAD, TOMMY or JO (Otherwise known as WASSY.) Last heard of at St. Albans, Vermont. Then employed by Mr. R. A. Warner, 1914. He is a Montreal, Canada, boy. His old pard Len wants to hear from him.—Address LEONARD, Flat 6, 1025 3rd Ave., S. Minneapolis, Minn.

WAIDNER, GEORGE. 139 Inf. Somewhere in Georgia, last I heard from him. Comes from Baltimore, Md., and, as I do, too, would like very much to hear from him.—Address GEORGE MILLER, care *Adventure.*

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DODSON, CLAUDE E., MR. MILLER, MR. BYRD, MR. BOYD, or any of the other boys I chummed with in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Dodsen was wire-worker, jeweler man and shoemaker and was thinking of going to South America. Miller owned a ranch somewhere in Texas. Byrd was railroad freight conductor. Boyd was man about 42 or 45 with scars all over his head. If any of the boys see this, write me as you all know me.—Address TELEGRAPH OPERATOR, C. F., 43 W. 10th St., Chester, Pa., care Bob McWinters.

FRED. Write sister KATE in Chicago, Ill.

HUGILL, ASHTON C. and HUGO VAN ALSTYN whom I left in San Francisco nearly thirty years ago. "Ash" and "Van", write your old pal of the Western trails —Address NEWT. A. MEYER, Granby, Quebec, Can.

RAPIDEAU, JOHN. Variously spelled ROBIDU, RABIDO, etc. French extraction, short, stout, very dark, 45 years. Formerly in northern Michigan. Last heard of Sand Point, Idaho, and Helena, Mont. Might be in Canada or Northwest. Information welcomed from people who have known him.—Address L. G., care *Adventure*.

ZABRANSKY, WILLIAM (Cousin). 7 or 8 years ago enlisted in the Marines at Fort Dade, Florida.—Address MISS J. M. VOKOLEK, Union Special Machine Co., 300 West Kinzie St., Chicago, Ill.

GUTTROFF, HERMAN MARTIN (Uncle.) Last heard from 20 years ago. Was then working on ferry boats in New York and lived in Garden Street, Hoboken, N. J. About 50 odd years and has tattoo on chest and arms.—Address ROBERT DE SAVOYE, 2202 Sumpter St., Houston, Texas.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

WHITE, JAMES FREDERICK. Last heard from in Cleveland. Then bellhop at Hotel Lincoln on Ontario St. 31 years old. Supposed to leave Cleveland for Milwaukee, Wis., to join his mother, Polly and brother Willie. Son of Ralph White. May be in Navy, but was turned down some years ago—too short.—Address MRS. MARY CALDWELL WHITE, 611 Talbot St., St. Thomas, Ont., Canada.

GOWEN, FLOYD E. Brown hair and eyes. Left thumb and one or two fingers missing. Last heard of in State of Washington. Brakeman on logging-train. Have good news for him.—Address M. GOWEN, care *Adventure*.

WALKER, WILLIAM, of Tonopah, who was in same detachment of the Nevada State Police as myself last year. Please write to JOHN J. RUDEN, 707 N. 63d St., Seattle, Wash.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

MARRONE, VITO. Last heard from two years ago. At that time lived in Brooklyn, N. Y., around, 300 Sackett Street.—Address A. T. WESTBERG, 11½ West 63d St., New York.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the First October or Mid-October issue of *Adventure*. They can get the name of the inquirer from this magazine:

CHANTLES, Memer de; Cunningham, James, Maggie, Mary and John; Doolittle, J. C.; Dupree, Alex.; Gainty, John (Husband); Gende, Eugenio (Cuzzucrea Eugenio); Golden, Jimmie; Halloran, "Tom"; Hammack, (Count) B. H.; Harper, Lafayette (Grandfather); Johnson, Standfast) J. C.; King, Frank M.; Loveday, Fr. (Husband); Rigney, Anna; Sibley, John Rodney (Husband); Starks, Percy Raymond; Stewart, Ben; Van Tassel, "Red"; Westfall, Clarence V.

MISCELLANEOUS: Bunch who were on the "Drag Line" between Button Willow and Lost Hills, California, 1913-14-15. Relatives of Franklin J. Fellows.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH, Ruth Gilfillan, Lee Hays; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer.

NUMBERS L. T. 284, C. 293, W 311, W. 312, L. T. 343. Please send us your present address. Letters forwarded to you at address given us do not reach you.—Address J. E. COX, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

MID-NOVEMBER ADVENTURE

Besides the two stories mentioned in the ad on page 2, you will find the ten following red-blooded stories in the Mid-November number, in your hands on October 18th.

THE FATE OF BIENCOURT — *By William Holloway*
A tale of the last survivors of the ill-fated French Huguenot colony at Port Royal, Nova Scotia.

THE BLACK LURE — *By Charles Beadle*
Out of the heart of the African jungle this tattered, sore, half-crazed white man comes—with a tale such as white men had never heard before.

A QUICK DECISION — *By E. E. Harriman*
A story from cow-land about a practical joker and a joke that missed fire.

TWO CALLS IN THE JUNGLE — *By Clyde B. Hough*
Into the Philippine wilds this story takes you to the sight which one of Uncle Sam's colored troopers comes across.

PIE FOR MAGPIE — *By W. C. Tuttle*
The "back-to-nature" movement hits Piperock with a bang—*Magpie* is the first experimenter, but soon the woods are full of 'em.

THE ADVENTURER OF THE HEARTH — *By Stephen Chalmers*
Are you one of these adventurers? Yes, or you would not be reading this. Then you will enjoy Mr. Chalmers' essay.

A FLUTTER IN SALVAGE — *By H. P. Holt*
A tale of the sea and the treasures that lie at its bottom—and the land-wolves who angle for them.

MONTE CRISTO II. — *By J. Allan Dunn*
He had social ambitions, but with the girls he was a frost—when *Monte Cristo* came to hand and suggested the remedy.

BLAZE — *By Warren H. Miller*
The story of a dog—also of a Quaker—far up in the Northern big-game country.

GABOREAU THE TERRIBLE. Part II — *By Gordon Young*
In the second part of this lively story *Everhard* sits down to an unusual dinner—but one which is not to be finished without interruption.

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Test Phonographs This Way

Before You Decide Which One You Want

Does It Play All Records?

Or does it require you to limit your selection to its own make? Do you want to own a phonograph which will keep you from hearing *all* your favorites?

Some artists sing for one record maker, some for another.

The Brunswick plays *all* records, and at their best. And it is the only famous instrument with the Ultona, one of the chief features of the Brunswick Method of Reproduction.

The Ultona is a new conception, not an attachment nor makeshift. It is a universal player, instantly adaptable to any make of record.

Just a turn of the hand presents the proper diaphragm and needle. And it is made slightly oversize so as to develop the hitherto lost sound waves.

What About Tone?

In the Brunswick Amplifier we use wood solely —no metal castings, no tin. We believe in the violin principle.

The Brunswick Amplifier is molded of hollywood, in a shape demanded by acoustic laws.

Thus tone is given every opportunity to expand. Wood gives the proper vibration which a casting can not.

And so the Brunswick Method of Reproduction, heralded as the most advanced of all, brings new tonal values, new standards

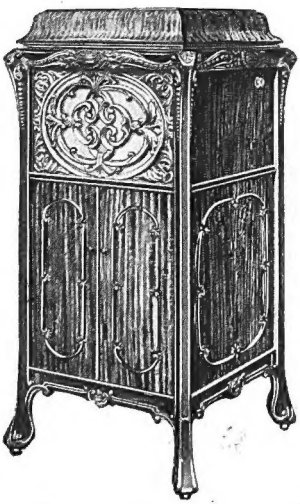
One must hear The Brunswick to appreciate its superiority. Your ear will be instantly appreciative. You'll say you never heard such wondrous reproduction before.

Does The Brunswick Cost More?

No. In spite of its overwhelming advantages, the price is comparable with those lacking Brunswick ideas. Model for model, The Brunswick has been kept at the usual prices. Yet it could easily command more.

This instrument is made by the House of Brunswick; a leader for 73 years in the wood-working art. We have long maintained a nation-wide organization, with branches and dealers everywhere.

And so the cost of distribution is lessened. Thus we can afford to offer a super-phonograph at ordinary prices.

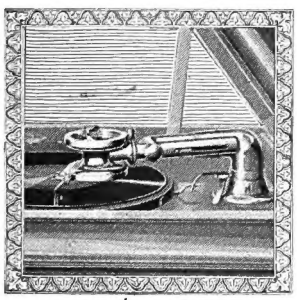


Where Can I Hear The Brunswick?

There is a Brunswick Dealer in your town. He will be glad to play The Brunswick for you, and show you the advantages of the Brunswick Method of Reproduction.

This will not put you under the slightest obligation to buy. We want you to make comparisons. You will then appreciate The Brunswick betterments.

Go now and hear this new-day instrument. Then decide if you could be happy with another.



The Brunswick

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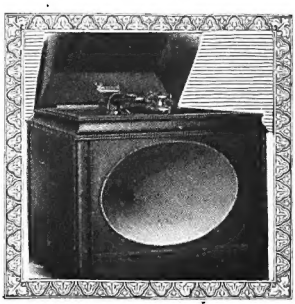

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How I Improved My Memory In One Evening

The Amazing Experience of Victor Jones

"Of *course* I place you! Mr. Addison Sims of Seattle.

"I don't remember correctly—and I *do* remember correctly—Mr. Burroughs, the lumberman, introduced me to you at the luncheon of the Seattle Rotary Club three years ago in May. This is a pleasure indeed! I haven't laid eyes on you since that day. How is the grain business? And how did that amalgamation work out?"

The assurance of the speaker—in the crowded corridor of the Hotel McAlpin—compelled me to turn and look at him, though I must say it is not my usual habit to "listen in" even in a hotel lobby.

"He is David M. Roth, the most famous memory expert in the United States," said my friend Kennedy, answering my question before I could get it out. "He will show you a lot more wonderful things than that, before the evening is over."

And he did.

As we went into the banquet room the toastmaster was introducing a long line of guests to Mr. Roth. I got in line and when it came my turn, Mr. Roth asked, "What are your initials, Mr. Jones, and your business connection and telephone number?" Why he asked this I learned later, when he picked out from the crowd the 60 men he had met two hours before and called each by name without a mistake. What is more, he named each man's business and telephone number, for good measure.

I won't tell you all the other amazing things this man did except to tell how he called back, without a minute's hesitation, long lists of numbers, bank clearings, prices, lot numbers, parcel post rates and anything else the guests had given him in rapid order.

* * * * * *

When I met Mr. Roth again—which you may be sure I did the first chance I got—he rather bowled me over by saying, in his quiet, modest way:

"There is nothing miraculous about my remembering anything I want to remember, whether it be names, faces, figures, facts or something I have read in a magazine.

"*You can do this just as easily as I do.* Anyone with an average mind can learn quickly to do exactly the same things which seem so miraculous when I do them.

"My own memory," continued Mr. Roth, "was originally very faulty. Yes it was—a really *poor* memory. On meeting a man I would lose his name in thirty seconds, while now there are probably 10,000 men and women in the United States, many of whom I have met but once, whose names I can tell instantly on meeting them."

"That is all right for you, Mr. Roth," I interrupted, "you have given years to it. But how about me?"

"Mr. Jones," he replied, "I can teach you the secret of a good memory in one evening. This is not a guess, because I have done it with thousands of pupils. In the first of seven simple lessons which I have prepared for home study, I show you the basic principle of my whole system and you will find it—not hard work as you might fear—but just like playing a fascinating game. I will prove it to you."

He didn't have to prove it. His Course did; I got it the very next day from his publishers, the Independent Corporation.

When I tackled the first lesson, I suppose I was the most surprised man in forty-eight states to find that I had learned in about one hour—how to remember a list of one hundred words so that I could call them off forward and back without a single mistake.

That first lesson *stuck*. And so did the other six.

Read this letter from C. Louis Allen, who at 32 years became president of a million dollar corporation, the Pyrene Manufacturing Company of New York, makers of the famous fire extinguisher:

> "Now that the Roth Memory Course is finished, I want to tell you how much I have enjoyed the study of this most fascinating subject. Usually these courses involve a great deal of drudgery, but this has been nothing but pure pleasure all the way through. I have derived much benefit from taking the course of instruction and feel that I shall continue to strengthen my memory. That is the best part of it. I shall be glad of an opportunity to recommend your work to my friends."

Mr. Allen didn't put it a bit too strong. The Roth Course is priceless! I can absolutely *count* on my memory now. I can call the name of most any man I have met before—and I am getting better all the time. I can remember any figures I wish to remember. Telephone numbers come to mind instantly, once I have filed them by Mr. Roth's easy method. Street addresses are just as easy.

The old fear of forgetting (you know what that is) has vanished. I used to be "scared stiff" on my feet—because I wasn't *sure*. I couldn't remember what I wanted to say.

Now I am sure of myself, and confident and "easy as an old shoe" when I get on my feet at the club, or at a banquet, or in a business meeting, or in any social gathering.

Perhaps the most enjoyable part of it all is that I have become a good conversationalist—and I used to be as silent as a sphinx when I got into a crowd of people who knew things.

Now I can call up like a flash of lightning most any fact I want right at the instant I need it most. I used to think a "hair trigger" memory belonged only to the prodigy and genius. Now I see that every man of us has that kind of a memory if he only knows how to make it work right.

I tell you it is a wonderful thing, after groping around in the dark for so many years to be able to switch the big searchlight on your mind and see instantly everything you want to remember.

This Roth Course will do wonders in your office.

Since we took it up you never hear anyone in *our* office say "I guess" or "I think it was about so much" or "I forget that right now" or "I can't remember" or "I must look up his name." Now they are right there with the answer—like a shot.

Have you ever heard of "Multigraph" Smith? Real name H. Q. Smith, Division Manager of the Multigraph Sales Company, Ltd., in Montreal. Here is just a bit from a letter of his that I saw last week:

> "Here is the whole thing in a nutshell: Mr. Roth has a most remarkable Memory Course. It is simple, and easy as falling off a log. Yet with one hour a day of practice anyone—I don't care who he is—can improve his Memory 100% in a week and 1,000% in six months."

My advice to you is don't wait another minute. Send to Independent Corporation for Mr. Roth's amazing course and see what a wonderful memory you have got. Your dividends in *increased earning power* will be enormous.

VICTOR JONES

Send No Money

So confident is the Independent Corporation, the publishers of the Roth Memory Course, that once you have an opportunity to see in your own home how easy it is to double, yes, triple your memory power in a few short hours, that they are willing to send the course on free examination.

Don't send any money. Merely mail the coupon or write a letter and the complete course will be sent, all charges prepaid, at once. If you are not entirely satisfied send it back any time within five days after you receive it and you will owe nothing.

On the other hand, if you are as pleased as are the thousands of other men and women who have used the course send only $5 in full payment. You take no risk and you have everything to gain, so mail the coupon now before this remarkable offer is withdrawn.

FREE EXAMINATION COUPON

Independent Corporation

Division of Business Education,
Dept. 4711, 119 West 40th St., New York.

Publishers of The Independent, "The Most Satisfactory War Journal in America"

Please send me the Roth Memory Course of seven lessons. I will either remail the course to you within five days after its receipt or send you $5.

Name .....

Address .....

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Adv. 11-3-18

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